JOURNAL OF EXPERIMENTAL SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY 7, 173–189 (1971)

Physical Attractiveness and Dating Choice: A Test of the Matching Hypothesis[1]

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Previous studies have failed to find support for the hypothesis, derived from Level of Aspiration Theory, that individuals chose to date those whose "social desirability" level is similar to their own. In the present experiments, which were designed to test the matching hypothesis, the salience of possible rejection by the dating choice was varied. Both experiments found support for the principle of matching in social choice. This support was obtained, however, not just under conditions in which rejection was presumably salient but for all conditions of choice. This and additional findings were discussed.

Several investigators have speculated about the role that physical attractiveness may play in the process of romantic attraction (e.g., de Jong, 1952; Elder, 1969). Of particular interest has been whether or not people tend to "pair-off" with individuals of their own physical attractiveness level. That a positive relationship should exist between the physical attractiveness of the seeker and that of the sought-after was hypothesized by Walster, Aronson, Abrahams, and Rottman (1966). Deriving their hypotheses from Level of Aspiration Theory (see Lewin, Dembo, Festinger, and Sears, 1944), they predicted that an individual will choose a date of approximately his own level of social desirability when making a *realistic* social choice. Realistic social choices, according to LA Theory, are influenced not only by the objective desirability of the choice alternative, but by the individual's perception of the *proba-*

[1] This research was supported in part by National Science Foundation grants GS 1897 and GS 1577, by National Institute of Mental Health grants MH 16661 and MH 16729, and by the Office of Student Affairs, University of Minnesota.

bility of attaining that goal. One's social desirability[2] (which includes one's assessment of his own physical attractiveness) should influence one's perception of the probability of attaining any particular social object. When making realistic choices, then, one should choose romantic partners of approximately his own level of physical attractiveness.

The Walster *et al.* (1966) experiment, conducted in a computer dating setting, did not support the matching hypothesis. An individual's own level of physical attractiveness affected neither his liking for his or her date nor his tendency to ask out the date a second time. Everyone, regardless of his own degree of physical attractiveness, liked best and most often asked out the extremely attractive dates. Unattractive Ss were aware that the extremely attractive dates did not like them as much as did dates more similar in appearance, but this did not affect their preferences or behavior. Other experimenters have also reported failures to support the matching hypothesis (i.e., Brislin and Lewis, 1968; Walster, 1970). Support for the matching principle is available only in an unpublished study by Kiesler and Baral (1966).

The matching hypothesis seems reasonable, however, and several attempts have been made to reconcile its plausibility with the data which has failed to support it.

1. It has been proposed that individuals begin to pair up on the basis of social desirability only after extensive experience with a specific group of potential dates.[3] It has been argued that initially everyone will approach the most socially desirable dates possible. After a time, the most desirable couples select each other and thus eliminate themselves from the "dating market." Matching then occurs only when an individual realizes that time is running out and that he must settle for a person of moderate attractiveness. Thus, it has been argued that the matching hypothesis is more likely to be demonstrated with older Ss, and with Ss who have known each other for some time, than with the 18-year old strangers used in the Walster *et al.* (1966) study.

2. Other attempts at reconciliation have focused upon the lack of salience of social *rejection* in the computer dance situation. According to LA Theory, goal-setting is influenced by the valence of possible failure to the individual. An individual who has little or no fear of failure should choose a much more difficult goal than an individual for whom the negative valence of failure is very great.

[2] Walster *et al.* defined "social desirability" as "The sum of an individual's social assets, weighted by *importance and salience* for others." Social assets such as physical attractiveness, popularity, personableness, and material resources were presumed to be important factors in determining one's social desirability level.

[3] For example, Dr. Eugene Burnstein, University of Michigan, has expounded this point of view.

Fear of failure may arise from personality factors. Thus, it has been suggested that only certain personality types—namely, those with high rejection fears—will operate on the matching principle.[4] Situational factors may also heighten or minimize fear of failure. If the probability of failure is zero in a situation, individuals would have no reason to operate on the matching principle. People placed in circumstances where the possibility of rejection is especially salient, embarrassing, or costly, however, should be especially prone to show evidence of matching.

It has been argued that the Walster *et al.* (1966) setting minimized the negative valence of possible failure. The subjects were incoming freshmen, the school year had just started, and a possible rejection by a date may not have been perceived to be as unpleasant as it would have been later in the year when social pressure to date and awareness of social restrictions would have increased. In addition, it may have been unusually difficult for incoming freshmen to assess their probability of failure. Although they undoubtedly had an excellent idea as to where they stood in a high school "dating market," the freshmen had virtually no information as to their ranking in the college dating market since they had only been at college 1 week. Both these factors may have minimized subjects' fear of rejection and caused everyone to set higher and more undifferentiated levels of aspiration than they normally would.

3. Others have argued that individuals in the computer dance setting were choosing dates under *idealistic* rather than *realistic* choice conditions. According to LA Theory, idealistic choices are completely determined by the desirability of the choice alternative. They represent what the individual *wishes* he could get, while realistic choices represent what the individual *expects* to get and, therefore, what it is worthwhile to attempt to get. Because dates for the Walster *et al.* (1966) computer dance were assigned, individuals were not forced to consider their own attractiveness in initially deciding who to attempt to date. Thus, some individuals were probably able to obtain their ideal goal of a very attractive date even though such an attainment might have been impossible in their actual social life. Perhaps those who achieved their ideal goal showed more interest in *retaining* it than they would have shown in trying to *attain* it initially.

The following two experiments, independently conceived and conducted, tested the matching hypothesis under conditions designed to emphasize or de-emphasize the possibility of rejection by the object of

[4] Dr. Barry Collins, UCLA, had argued that high fear of rejection individuals operate to a greater extent on the matching principle than do other individuals. Since individuals high in fear of rejection may be unlikely to attend a computer dance, it is possible to argue that Walster *et al.* (1966) was not a suitable test of the matching hypothesis.

dating choice. It was hypothesized that the matching hypothesis be supported under conditions of *realistic* choice, or when possible rejection by the object of choice was emphasized. Little support for the hypothesis was expected under conditions of *idealistic* choice, or conditions under which a date with the object of choice was guaranteed.

EXPERIMENT I: THE WALSTER-WALSTER EXPERIMENT (1969)

This experiment tested the hypothesis that the principle of matching would operate in a computer dance setting if the probability and penalties of rejection were increased. Thus, the original Walster *et al.* (1966) experiment was repeated with slight modifications in which the probability of rejection was increased for some Ss and minimized for others.

As in the original experiment, the physical attractiveness and personality of each subject was assessed. In this experiment, however, Ss were asked to specify exactly the kind of date they would prefer. They could specify the level of physical attractiveness, personality, popularity, etc., of their prospective date. In one set of conditions the possibility of rejection by dating choice was made very salient and the negative consequences of the date's rejection of them were emphasized. In another set of conditions, the possibility of rejection was minimized. An attempt was made to make individuals confident that whichever date they chose would be happy to date them. It was predicted that the matching principle would operate most strongly in the conditions in which rejection was made salient and least strongly, or not at all, in the conditions in which the probability of rejection was minimized.

Method

Subjects. Advertisements were circulated on the University of Minnesota campus for a "Computer Matching Dance." From a large number of freshmen and sophomores purchasing tickets to the dance, a subsample of 177 males and 170 females were randomly selected to participate in the study.

Procedure. At the time tickets were purchased, S's level of physical attractiveness was assessed. Four student accomplices rated S's physical attractiveness on a nine-point scale, ranging from 0 "Extremely Unattractive," to 8 "Extremely Attractive."[5] These ratings served as our indicant of S's level of social desirability.

After purchasing their tickets, S's filled out a questionnaire designed to assess whether physical attractiveness was positively correlated with other indicants of social desirability, as Walster *et al.* had shown it to be. Subjects were requested to

[5] The raters' evaluations intercorrelated .48 on the average. This is similar to the average intercorrelation of .54 secured in Walster *et al.*, 1964.

give estimates of (1) their intelligence, (2) the degree of consideration they typically showed for others, (3) their level of physical attractiveness, (4) their popularity with the opposite sex, (5) the extent to which they had an outgoing personality, (6) the "goodness" of their personality as viewed by others of the same sex, (7) the "goodness" of personality as viewed by others of the opposite sex, (8) the degree of nervousness typically felt on dates, (9) their ease of obtaining exceptionally attractive dates, (10) the frequency of dates in the past year, and (11) the number of people they had dated. Each S's answers to questions 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 9 were summed to form an index of S's Perceived Social Desirability.

After completing the above questionnaire, Rosenfeld's (1964) Fear of Rejection Scale was administered to permit later assessment of the S's chronic fear of rejection level.

When the questionnaires had been completed, Ss were directed to a nearby room where *E* explained that they had been randomly selected to participate in a special experimental program. It was in the presentation of this program that the possibility of rejection was made salient for High Probability of Rejection (High POR) Ss and minimized Low Probability of Rejection (Low POR) Ss.

High POR Ss were told that a random sample of students (Os) who had agreed to participate in a study of computer matched dating had been obtained. These Os presumably had been told that, if they wished, they could change their minds about participating after meeting their tentatively assigned date. *E* said that a special meeting would be set up before the computer dance so that each O could meet the date assigned to him. After the brief get-together, O would decide whether or not he or she wished to date S. Ss were told that, so far, approximately 50% of the Os had refused to date their computer matches after meeting them. *E* added that because of scheduling difficulties, if O decided that she did not wish to date S, it would be impossible to give S another selection for the dance. An appointment the next day was then arranged so that S could meet the date assigned to him and she could decide whether or not to date him.

As in the High POR condition, Low POR Ss were told that a random sample of Os had agreed to participate in the study. Low POR Ss were told, however, that Os had been informed that results of the computer study would be of little value if everyone felt free to change his mind about participating after he had been matched with a partner. Therefore, as a condition of participating in the study, all Os had agreed to attend the computer dance with whichever partner was assigned to them. Again an appointment was then arranged with Low POR Ss for the next day. These Ss, however, were merely to pick up the name and address of their assigned date.

Interview data indicated that all Ss understood the procedure.

After the high or low fear of rejection manipulation had been performed,

Ss were requested to specify the characteristics that they desired in a date. All Ss were told that *E* had a very large pool of Os and could, therefore, guarantee

finding an O who possessed almost any combination of traits the S wished. Each S was then asked to specify on a questionnaire how intelligent, considerate, physically attractive, popular, and reserved or outgoing in personality he wished his date to be.

Choices were indicated on a nine-point scale ranging from 0 (indicating that it was unnecessary that O possess any of the quality in question) to 8 (indicating that it was necessary that O possess a high degree of the quality). Popularity and physical attractiveness specifications were summed to form an index of the level of social desirability each S requested in his date (*SD* Index).

Finally, Ss were asked to rank according to importance, ten characteristics one could wish a date to have. These were age, height, race, religion, year in college, intelligence, considerateness, physical attractiveness, popularity, and personality.

Results

Test of Hypotheses. It will be recalled that we predicted that the matching principle would operate more strongly in the high POR condition than in the low POR condition. Thus, we expected to secure a Physical Attractiveness × Probability of Rejection interaction. This expectation was not confirmed (Interaction $F = .21$, $df = 3$ and 331). Rather, it is evident that the more physically attractive the S, the more socially desirable a date he requested, regardless of whether or not the possibility of rejection had been minimized or heightened. Attractive Ss chose more physically attractive dates ($F = 6.02$, $p < .001$) and more popular dates ($F = 7.17$, $p < .001$), and thus dates higher on the Social Desirability Index ($F = 8.56$, $p < .001$) than did unattractive Ss. It

TABLE 1
EFFECT OF PROBABILITY OF REJECTION ON CHOICE OF ROMANTIC PARTNERS

Probability of rejection:	N	Requirements in Date: Physical attractiveness	Popularity
	Low		
Very unattractive Ss	45	6.27	5.44
Fairly unattractive Ss	53	6.55	5.72
Fairly attractive Ss	55	6.58	5.95
Very attractive Ss	46	6.78	5.98
	High		
Very unattractive Ss	46	6.24	5.37
Fairly unattractive Ss	29	6.59	5.79
Fairly attractive Ss	42	6.62	5.98
Very attractive Ss	31	6.90	6.16

appears that subjects in this experiment were operating on the matching principle, and operating on this principle to the same extent in both conditions.

Looking at some of the other requests made in dates, there is some evidence that physically attractive Ss requested more outgoing dates than did those who were physically unattractive ($F = 3.34$, $p < .05$). It is interesting, however, that there appeared to be no difference in preference in the level of intelligence attractive and unattractive Ss wished to have in their dates ($F = 1.06$, $p = .37$), nor a difference in the extent to which they wished their dates to be considerate ($F = .18$, $p = .91$).

The above results, then, while they show definite evidence of matching, show no evidence that the situational manipulation of heightening or minimizing fear of rejection had any effect upon the level of social desirability requested in a date.[6]

One might expect the matching principle to operate more strongly with individuals who are typically concerned about the possibility of rejection than with individuals less concerned with rejection. It will be recalled that Ss completed Rosenfeld's (1964) Fear of Rejection Scale.[7] Subjects were divided into three groups on the basis of their scores on this test. Subjects scoring from 1 to 29 were classified as low in fear of rejection. Those scoring from 30 to 40 were classified as medium in fear of rejection, and those scoring from 41 to 74 were classified as being high in fear of rejection.

An analysis of the effect of level of physical attractiveness and fear of rejection (as assessed by Rosenfeld's scale) upon dating choice indicates that attractiveness and fear of rejection do not interact in affecting the social desirability of S's dating choices (Interaction $F = 1.47$, 6 and 323 *df*).

Additional Analyses. 1. Although males and females did not differ on the Social Desirability (physical attractiveness plus popularity) they wish in a date ($F = 3.30$, 1 and 331 *df*, $p = .07$), several sex differences in preferences are evident. Specifically, females request more intelligent dates ($F = 21.85$, $p < .001$), more considerate dates ($F = 28.38$, $p < .001$), and more outgoing dates ($F = 23.68$, $p < .001$) than do males. There is also a slight, but nonsignificant, tendency for females to request more popular dates than males ($F = 3.33$, $p = .07$). On the

[6] The POR main effect and the Sex × Condition × Attractiveness Level interaction were also insignificant.

[7] Many of Rosenfeld's items ask specifically about an individual's fear of rejection in social situations (i.e., "After a party I wonder if I made a bad impression." "If people think poorly about me I think of it for a long time.").

other hand, males request that their dates possess more physical attractiveness than do females ($F = 29.20$, $p < .001$).

2. It was expected that, as in the Walster *et al.* (1966) experiment, each S's level of physical attractiveness as judged by the student accomplices would correlate positively with the extent to which the S perceived that he possessed other social assets. This expectation was confirmed. The more physically attractive an individual was, the higher he rated himself on the Perceived Social Desirability index ($F = 9.64$, $p < .001$). When we examine the individual items making up the index, we find that physically attractive individuals judge themselves to be more physically attractive ($F = 11.15$, $p < .001$), more popular ($F = 13.24$, $p < .001$), as having a better personality, both when judged by the opposite sex ($F = 3.89$, $p < .001$) and when judged by the same sex ($F = 2.96$, $p < .05$), and more able to get dates ($F = 11.92$, $p < .001$) than do unattractive individuals. In addition, attractive Ss report themselves as having had more dates ($F = 18.62$, $p < .001$), with more individuals ($F = 7.94$, $p < .001$) than do unattractive Ss.

EXPERIMENT II: THE BERSCHEID–DION EXPERIMENT

Again, this experiment tested the hypothesis that the matching principle would operate more strongly under realistic conditions of dating choice, or conditions in which there was a possibility that S would be rejected by the person of his choice, than under idealistic choice conditions in which a date with the object of a choice was guaranteed.

To test this hypothesis the physical attractiveness of all Ss was assessed as part of a "study of undergraduate dating." Each S was later asked to choose from among six photographs of opposite-sex peers, also presumably participating in the study, the person with whom they would actually like to go out with on a date. The six photographs had previously been rated in attractiveness by undergraduate student judges and varied from attractive to unattractive. We expected that Ss making choices under realistic conditions would choose dates similar to themselves in attractiveness, while Ss making choices under idealistic conditions would uniformly choose attractive dates.

Several studies have suggested that physical attractiveness is a more important component of a woman's social desirability than it is of a man's (e.g., Coombs & Kenkel, 1966). To test the hypothesis that matching on the basis of physical attractiveness is more pronounced for female Ss than for male Ss, both male and female Ss were asked to participate in the study.

It was predicted, then, that our $2 \times 2 \times 2$ design (Attractiveness of

S × Condition of Choice × Sex of S) would yield a three-way interaction of the nature described above.

Subjects

One hundred thirteen University of Minnesota undergraduates who were neither married, engaged, nor going steady participated in the study. All agreed to take part in an "undergraduate dating study" said to involve participation in two separate laboratory sessions, in return for $2.00.

Procedure

Session 1

At this first session, Ss were asked to fill out two questionnaires. The first questionnaire was entitled "Undergraduate Activity/Attitude Survey." It was designed to secure some information about each S's dating experiences and his self-perceptions. The questionnaire included items concerning S's dating history and current dating status, and also requested S to estimate the relative importance of his own personal appearance, his personality, and his intelligence in attracting people of the same sex and of the opposite sex. In addition, each S rated his satisfaction with a number of his physical characteristics (e.g., chest, face, waist) and his satisfaction with several other personal characteristics (e.g., personality, creativeness, intelligence level). These last "Body-Cathexis" and "Self-Cathexis" scales were adapted from scales constructed by Secord and Jourard (1953). Subjects were assured that their replies to the "Activity/Attitude" questionnaire would be treated in a confidential manner.

When Ss had completed the first questionnaire, they were reminded that they had agreed to participate in a second session. They were informed that the procedure of the second session would vary for those participating in the study. Some students would simply be asked to tell the experimenters more about their dating attitudes, while others would be randomly selected to take part in an actual computer dating situation.

Each S was asked to fill out a second questionnaire, which ostensibly was used in the event S was selected to go out on a computer date. The second dating questionnaire had to do principally with dating preferences. Ss were asked to indicate, for example, which extracurricular activities interested them most, what kinds of activities they preferred on dates, and what personal characteristics they preferred in dates (e.g., religion, height, etc.). Ss had been requested to bring, if possible, a yearbook picture of themselves to session 1. Whether they brought pictures of themselves or not, they were informed that since many Ss did not have a recent yearbook picture available, a photographer had been hired to take Polaroid snapshots. (A yearbook picture was requested to make plausible the subsequent

presentation to Ss of six facsimiles of yearbook photos of potential dates.) Ss were then ushered into a room, posed by the photographer in a standard position, and a full-length picture was taken.

Session 2

All Ss were informed that they had been randomly selected to take part in the computer dating study. The information contained in their dating preference questionnaires ostensibly had been fed into a computer, and had yielded six dating possibilities. Ss were instructed that they would have an opportunity to choose from among the six potential dates the one they would most like to meet and date.

If Ss had been randomly assigned to the *Realistic* condition, he was further instructed that a date would be arranged only if his dating choice had reciprocated his choice. Male Ss, for example, were told:

> These girls have all seen your pictures, along with the pictures of other boys with whom they have been matched on the basis of the dating questionnaire. To insure the greatest compatability between people, a choice must be made by mutual consent. . . If they do, we will arrange the date. In fairness to the other boys in the study, we can only give each boy one choice.

If S had been assigned to the *Idealistic* condition, it was made clear that he was guaranteed a date with anyone he chose:

> Since we felt that it would be difficult to give everyone a choice, we decided to have the boys choose whom they wanted to meet. As a condition for being in this part of the study, the girls have therefore agreed to go out with whomever picks them from among their computer matches. After you decide, we will arrange a date with the girl you have chosen. In fairness to the boys taking part, we can only give each boy one choice.

The experimenter then took a set of six pictures from an envelope marked with S's name and asked him to decide which one of the girls (or boys) he would like to meet. The set included photographs of two members of the opposite sex who were very physically attractive, two of medium attractiveness, and two who were physically unattractive.[8]

After making their choice Ss were then given a questionnaire checking their understanding of the experimental procedure, were thanked for

[8] The physical attractiveness rating of each of the pictures was determined in a preliminary study. One hundred Minnesota undergraduates rated 50 yearbook pictures of persons of the opposite sex with respect to physical attractiveness. The criteria for choosing the 12 pictures to be used experimentally were: (a) High inter-rater agreement as to the physical attractiveness of the stimulus (the average inter-rater correlation for all of the pictures was .70); (b) Pictures chosen to represent the very attractive category and very unattractive category were not at the very extreme ends of attractiveness.

their participation, paid the $2.00 which had been agreed upon, and debriefed.

Results and Discussion

Realistic-Idealistic Choice Manipulation. Only one S failed to understand the experimental instructions. He was therefore discarded, leaving N = 112 (56 males, 56 females) who correctly responded on the questionnaire designed to check understanding of the condition of choice.

Physical Attractiveness Ratings of Subjects. A rating of each S's general physical attractiveness was made on the basis of the Polaroid snapshots taken at Session 1. Four undergraduate judges, two males and two females, placed all female Ss and then all male Ss into two equal-frequency categories, physically "attractive" and "unattractive." The degree of inter-judge agreement on category placement of each picture determined, for purposes of this study, whether S was classified as "attractive" or "unattractive."

Dependent Variable. An index of the degree of physical attractiveness Ss preferred in their dates was constructed by giving Ss who chose one of the two most attractive persons pictured in the photographs as his dating choice a score of 3; Ss who chose an average person were assigned a score of 2; and those who chose an unattractive person were given a score of 1.

Test of Hypotheses. It will be recalled that our $2 \times 2 \times 2$ design (Attractiveness of S $\times$ Condition of Choice $\times$ Sex of S) was expected to yield a three-way interaction such that Ss in the Realistic condition would choose dates similar to themselves in attractiveness while Ss in the Idealistic conditions would uniformly choose attractive dates, and that the matching effect would be more pronounced for female Ss than for male Ss. The mean level of physical attractiveness of dates chosen in each of the groups is reported in Table 2.

TABLE 2

PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS OF CHOSEN DATES[a]

	Males		Females		
	Attractive	Unattractive	Attractive	Unattractive	
Realistic choice condition	2.71	2.71	2.71	2.36	2.63
Idealistic choice condition	2.93	2.64	2.93	2.50	2.75
	2.82	2.68	2.82	2.43	

[a] N = 14 each cell; A mean of 3.00 is the maximum score possible.

It is evident that the expected three-way interaction was not obtained ($F = .25$, 1 and 104 *df*), nor were any significant two-way interactions apparent.

Rather, a main effect on the attractiveness of S dimension was secured ($F = 6.46$, 1 and 104 *df*, $p < .01$). Attractive Ss chose more attractive dates than did unattractive Ss.

The variation of condition of choice did not appear to significantly influence the extent of matching which occurred, ($F = 1.41$, 1 and 104, *df*). Ss in this experiment, as in the Walster–Walster experiment, appear to have operated on the matching principle even under conditions of choice in which a date was guaranteed.

With respect to the third variable of interest, Sex of S, the means for the various groups reveal that while females tended to choose slightly less attractive dates than males, the impact upon dating choice of this variable failed to reach an acceptable level of statistical significance ($F < 1.41$, 1 and 104 *df*).

Additional Analyses. The questionnaires completed by Ss contained several items designed to permit us to explore the relationship between a person's physical attractiveness and other variables. We were especially interested in the relationship between a S's physical attractiveness as determined from his Polaroid photo, and his actual dating history. If the physical attractiveness ratings of the Polaroid photos truly reflect a S's social desirability, there should be a relationship between these physical attractiveness ratings and frequency of dating.

The physical attractiveness of female Ss appears to be strongly related to their actual dating popularity. Attractive females had more dates within the past year ($r = .61$), the past month ($r = .50$), and the past week ($r = .44$) than unattractive females. (The Pearson *r*'s on all three dating indices are different from O at $p < .01$.) While there also appears to be a positive correspondence between dating frequency and physical attractiveness for male subjects (past year $r = .25$; month, $r = .21$; week $r = .13$), none of the coefficients representing the relationship are significantly different from O. There is a significant difference between male and female coefficients on the first variable, number of dates in past year ($Z = 2.13$). The male–female differences on the other two indices of dating frequency do not reach an acceptable level of confidence. (In both cases $Z = 1.65$, $p < .10$.)

The finding that physical attractiveness is more strongly related to the woman's dating frequency than to a man's seems intuitively reasonable and is compatible with the results of several studies which have examined the factors college students report to be important in making dating choices (e.g., Coombs and Kenkel, 1966; Williamson, 1966). These

studies consistently show that males place more importance on physical attractiveness in making dating and mating choices than do females. The finding is also similar to that of Walster *et al.* (1966) who reported an r of .31 between physical attractiveness and dating popularity for men and an r of .46 for women. The difference between these r's with a reported N of 327 men and 327 women is significant at the .02 level of confidence ($Z = 2.31$).

The data gathered concerning the number of close friends of the same and opposite sex reported by Ss of varying attractiveness levels, is somewhat perplexing. There appears to be a relationship between a male's physical attractiveness and the number of close friends he reports. Not only do more physically attractive males have more close friends of the opposite sex ($r = .51$, $p < .01$) but they appear to have more same-sex friends ($r = .29$, $p < .05$). No such relationship between physical attractiveness and number of friendships exists for girls (same-sex $r = -.10$; opposite-sex $r = .21$).

It appears, then, that physical attractiveness is not to be related to dating frequency for men, but rather to general friendship popularity. The reverse seems to be true for women.

With respect to S's perceptions of the relative importance of their own physical appearance, intelligence, and personality in attracting members of the opposite sex, there is evidence that the more physically attractive the woman, the more likely she is to rank physical attractiveness as an important personal asset in attracting members of the opposite sex ($r = .38$, $p < .01$). While men show no evidence of a significant relationship between physical attractiveness and the importance they place on their own physical attractiveness as an asset in attracting the opposite sex ($r = .17$), there appears to be evidence that the more physically attractive a man, the less importance he places upon intelligence as an asset ($r = -.36$, $p < .01$).

We were also interested in the relationship between physical attractiveness and degree of satisfaction with physical and nonphysical characteristics of the self. It will be recalled that Ss completed questionnaries adapted from scales devised by Secord and Jourard (1953) to assess satisfaction with various physical characteristics (Body-Cathexis) and also with nonphysical personal characteristics, such as personality, intelligence, and happiness (Self-Cathexis). Physical attractiveness of Ss as judged by the Polaroid photos was not related to body-cathexis for either males ($r = .07$) or for females ($r = -.05$). Nor was physical attractiveness related to self-cathexis for either sex (M $r = -.03$; F $r = .16$). Previous findings by Secord and Jourard had led us to expect that there would be a correspondence between the degree to which Ss

felt satisfaction wth their physical characteristics and their degree of satisfaction with nonphysical characteristics. This expectation was confirmed only with female Ss ($r = .48$, $p < .01$). Men did not show evidence of a significant relationship between self- and body-cathexis ($r = .23$). The difference between the coefficients of males and that of females is not significant.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Previous studies have failed to find support for the hypothesis that people in dating situations tend to pair off in terms of social desirability. It was thought that perhaps these failures to support the matching hypothesis were due to the inadvertent minimization of possibility of rejection by the object of dating choice. Thus, in both of the investigations reported here an attempt was made to vary the salience of the possibility of rejection by the date chosen. Both of the present investigations found support for the principle of matching in social choice. This support, however, was obtained not just under conditions in which rejection was presumably salient, but for all conditions of choice within the two studies. Since the two attempts to maximize probability of rejection did not seem to affect the extent to which matching was evident in dating choice, it seems that we must look elsewhere for an explanation of why previous studies failed to find support for the hypothesis, and, now, why the present experiments did.

One explanation seems most plausible for the obtained differences. Perhaps timing is extremely important in detecting operation of the matching principle. In each of the present experiments Ss had to decide how desirable a date they wished to approach. In Walster *et al.* (1966) and Brislin and Lewis (1968), Ss were assigned to interact with dates of varying levels of social desirability. After extensive interaction they were asked how desirable their date was and how much they wished to continue dating her. Dating choice in these studies was one of *maintaining* a social contact rather than one of attempting to *achieve* contact. It may be that the matching principle is a more potent determinant of how desirable a person one will be willing to approach than it is of how much another will be liked and approached again after initial contact.

Some additional evidence supports this notion. On their initial questionnaires, Ss in the Walster *et al.* experiment (1966) were asked how socially desirable they expected a "suitable" or "acceptable" date to be. The more attractive the S was, the more attractive, personable, and considerate he *expected* his date to be. Subjects were then given a chance to interact with real dates. After this point the operation of the matching principle could no longer be detected.

While the results of the present studies support the matching hypothesis, our attempts to discover factors which may affect the extent to which it will determine social choice failed. We expected that it would be a stronger determinant of choice when the possibility of rejection by the chosen person was salient than when a date with the chosen person was guaranteed. Two different situational manipulations of salience of rejection failed to show an effect upon matching. It could, of course, be argued that rejection in our supposedly idealistic choice condition was as salient to Ss as it was in our realistic choice conditions. It may have been that although a date was guaranteed in the idealistic conditions, Ss anticipated the prospect of a disgruntled date who would show her displeasure throughout the evening and this prospect influenced dating choice. It is clear, however, that Ss in the idealistic conditions would have more of a chance to bowl their dates over with their personalities or an enjoyable evening which might overcome the date's initial displeasure than would realistic condition Ss who could expect to be rejected before getting a foot in the door. If so, idealistic condition Ss should have evidenced less matching than realistic condition Ss. Another possible explanation of the failure of the possibility of rejection manipulation may be simply that realistic considerations in social choice are so ingrained that even under a "no strings" choice one's own physical attractiveness is still a strong influencing factor.

Our expectation of finding a personality difference in matching along the fear of rejection dimension was unconfirmed, as was our expectation that females would show more matching than males. Thus, although previous experiments had led us to believe that the matching phenomenon was probably fragile and that evidence of its operation could be discerned only under limited conditions, the present data suggest that matching, at least with respect to physical attractiveness, might operate under a fairly wide variety of conditions.

In sum, the results of the present studies indicate that attempts to interact with those of opposite-sex will be more frequent among those of approximately the same level of attractiveness. That physical attractiveness acts as a "gatekeeper" for interactions with members of the opposite sex is evident not only from the matching tendencies observed in these experiments, but also from the observed relationship between physical attractiveness and dating frequency. This relationship, which was especially strong for women, raises a number of questions. Concerning marital choice and satisfaction, for example, it would be interesting to know if physically attractive women use their range of opportunities for interaction with a variety of men to choose a mate who will be compatible along such dimensions as similarity of interests, values, and background or any of the factors which appear to lead to marital

stability. Given a wider range of choice and more experience in interacting with members of the opposite sex, it seems logical that a wiser choice could be made.

It also would be interesting to know the relationship, if any, between physical attractiveness and various personality characteristics. Given the correlation between attractiveness and frequency of interaction with the opposite sex, it would be surprising if attractiveness were not related to various personality characteristics, especially those having to do with self-confidence, etc. While no self-cathexis items bore a relationship to physical attractiveness for men, some relationships were observed for females. Physically attractive women, as one might expect, report more satisfaction with their general popularity ($r = .39$), their leadership ability ($r = .39$), and their degree of self-consciousness ($r = .32$). They also report, however, more dissatisfaction with their degree of self-understanding ($r = -.31$) than unattractive women do. Perhaps more sensitive scales could better explore the possible relationship between physical attractiveness and other personality characteristics, especially those which are likely to facilitate rewarding interactions.

In any event, the precise nature of the role physical attractiveness plays in interpersonal attraction, whether it is limited to opposite-sex attraction, whether its importance is limited to the college age group, its importance relative to other known variables in attraction such as attitudinal similarity, both initially and over time, is a matter for future research.

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(Received August 22, 1969)