Original Article

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE OR CHILDREN AND CHEATING? JANE AUSTEN'S REPRESENTATIONS OF FEMALE MATING STRATEGIES

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Abstract
Empirical Literary Darwinists investigate how themes and patterns predicted by human evolutionary theory are evident in fictive works. The current study fills an important gap in this emerging literature, and provides additional information in an area currently underrepresented in human evolutionary research in general. Previous research demonstrated how proper and dark male heroes in British Romantic literature represent high paternal investment and high mating effort strategies, respectively. This past work showed that people infer reproductively relevant behaviors from brief character depictions, and report preferring interactions with these characters in ways that would enhance their own reproductive success. We conducted a similar experiment investigating variation in female reproductive strategies depicted by six female characters in novels written by Jane Austen. Three women were described as loyal, quiet, "mother" figures, while three were described as active, boisterous and untamed "lover" figures. Results show that men recognize the distinct strategies, expressing a preference to marry the "mother" and realizing that the "lover" would be more likely to cheat on them. Women recognize that men would prefer the "lover" for sexual relations, and believe that the "mother" would be better with children and a better mother. Once again, people intuitively recognized reproductively relevant behavior from brief character sketches. Austen's intuitive evolutionary psychology may be one reason why her works remain so popular and well respected nearly 200 years after their publications.

Keywords: Darwinian literary studies, mating strategies, sex differences, sexual behavior

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Introduction

Literary Darwinism

Recently, a new paradigm has emerged to revive the humanities from moribund post-structuralist petrification. Literary Darwinism has rapidly gained interest and influence in the roughly two decades of its existence (Carroll, 2008). The proliferation of these works, which includes over a hundred articles and at least a dozen books, demonstrates a fertile niche for promoting the understanding of cultural works with the most powerful theory of the life sciences, evolution by natural and sexual selection. With influential works ranging from Joseph Carroll's (1995) theoretical foundations to Jon Gottschall's (2008) brilliant evolutionary reconstruction of Aegean life at the end of the Greek Dark Age, scholars in future generations will wonder why contemporary humanists did not immediately discard the discredited theories of human nature from the likes of Marx and Freud.

Many works in Literary Darwinism follow the humanist tradition of descriptive analysis. However, inter-disciplinary collaborations have given rise to empirical and quantitative studies of content and reader's perceptions (e.g., Carroll, Gottschall, Johnson, & Kruger, 2009). One line of this empirical work examines the depiction of male reproductive strategies in British Romantic literature of the late 18th and early 19th Centuries (Kruger, Fisher & Jobling, 2003; Kruger & Fisher, 2005a; Kruger & Fisher, 2005b; Kruger & Fisher, 2008). The proper and dark heroes in British Romantic literature respectively represent long-term and short-term male mating strategies (Kruger, Fisher & Jobling, 2003). Participants associated the proper hero dad with a cluster of characteristics indicative of a successful long-term, low risk and high parental investment male mating strategy and the dark hero cad with a high-risk, high mating effort reproductive strategy (Kruger & Fisher, 2005a; Kruger & Fisher, 2005b).

Both female and male readers readily identify distinct male mating strategies and respond to these characters in ways that would benefit their own reproductive success. For long-term relationships, women seek partners with the ability and willingness to sustain paternal investment in extended relationships (e.g., Buss & Schmitt, 1993). In contrast, for short-term relationships, women choose partners whose features indicate high genetic quality. With respect to characters, women preferred proper heroes when they were asked to imagine forming a long-term relationships, and the shorter the relationship, the more likely women were to choose dark heroes as imagined partners (Kruger, Fisher & Jobling, 2003; Kruger & Fisher, 2005a). Further, men saw the proper hero dad as more trustworthy than the dark hero cad, for example preferring them as a business partner, son-in-law, and companion for their girlfriends on a weekend trip out of town (Kruger & Fisher, 2008).

To date, there has been no parallel investigation of the portrayal of variation in women's mating strategies in works of fiction, and how readers identify and relate to characters displaying different strategies. We propose that similar to a "dad" *versus* "cad" distinction, women might display a "mother" *versus* "lover" distinction. We chose to use the mother/lover distinction rather than the Madonna/whore distinction (see Wright, 1994) due to the negative connotations of those traditional labels. We do not argue that these strategies precisely mirror those of the "dad" *vs* "cad" because of the sex differential in the costs and benefits of reproductive activities (e.g., Gangestad & Simpson, 1990).

Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology – ISSN 1933-5377 – Volume 4(4). 2010.

318

A second important consideration is that past research has tended to focus on the works of male authors. For example, Kruger, Fisher and Jobling (2003) used the characters Waverley, George Staunton, and Clement Cleveland by Sir Walter Scott (but also one character, Valancourt, by Ann Radcliffe). Authors may be most adept at accurately depicting the strategies of their own sex. For example, Ann Radcliffe's portrayal of proper hero Valancourt may have been overly-idealized, as he described as being much more physically attractive overall than other male characters (Kruger, Fisher & Jobling, 2003). Thus, female authors may provide the best depiction of variation in female reproductive strategies (see Ingalls, 2010, for an examination of sex differences in the writing style of men and women).

One of the most popular female authors from the Romance period is Jane Austen. Although there have been many passing references to the work of Jane Austen in various evolutionary papers and books (e.g., Barash & Barash, 2005), there has not been empirical exploration of her work from a Darwinian perspective.

Jane Austen

It is universally acknowledged that Jane Austen is one of the premier romance writers of the early 19th Century. Austen (1775-1817) was a popular English novelist known for her satirical work on the English gentry (Harman, 2009). Her work is immensely popular even today, having been translated into more than 30 languages including Japanese, Hebrew, Icelandic and Bengali, as well as minor languages such as Tamil, and Telugu. Her six complete novels are among the most read and most loved books in the English language. In addition, her novels have been made into numerous big screen and made for television movies (Harman, 2009)

Austen's work revolves around a love story, which makes her well known in the romance genre. Unlike modern romance novels, though, her novels did not contain mentions of touching or kissing, and certainly no sexual intercourse (Harman, 2009). Her plots were rather simple, in that they maintained the theme of boy and girl meet, face the obstacles that prevent them from pursuing a relationship, experience the removal of said obstacles, and then live happily-ever-after. Romantic tales containing this pattern have an incredibly long history; the known origin dates back to Greek and medieval tales, to Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* and contemporary fiction (Camp, 1997). For example, the popular *Bridget Jones' Diary* by Helen Fielding (1996) is a modern day Jane Austenesque novel (Harman, 2009). The widespread appeal and popularity of Austen's novels shows that her work, although written in a different era, addresses issues that are timeless, and therefore, potentially evolutionarily relevant.

Female Mating Strategies

Mating strategies help solve the adaptive problem of finding and keeping a mate. One can pursue a short-term mating strategy, investing little time, energy and resources in the relationship and mate, or utilize a long-term mating strategy, involving high levels of commitment and investment. Research has shown that both women and men pursue long-term and short-term relationships (e.g., Gangestad & Simpson, 1990). For either strategy, there are costs and benefits, and these costs and benefits differ for women and men.

Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology – ISSN 1933-5377 – Volume 4(4). 2010.

319

For women, the benefits of a long-term strategy include continual protection and resource provisioning, as well as parental investment from her partner. One of the most important considerations is that raising a child is difficult, and protection, resources and parental investment from a long-term partner will increase the likelihood that an offspring will live to reproductive age (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). One challenge of pursuing a long-term strategy is that the provisioning of resources and protection may not be immediate: a woman would need to wait for the right partner to be available and interested in a long-term relationship.

The benefits of a short-term mating strategy for women include immediate resources in exchange for sex, to test potential mates for a long-term relationship, and to gain protection (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). In addition, women may be able to engage a mate with high genetic quality for a short-term relationship, ensuring her future children also have high genetic quality (Gangestad & Simpson, 2000). The costs include a potential lowering of her mate-value and potentially having to raise a child on her own (Buss & Schmitt, 1993).

The benefits of a long-term mating strategy for men include access to high genetic quality mates, as well as not having to worry about which females are fertile. The costs include the paternal investment necessary to raise a child and losing the ability to mate with multiple females (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). In contrast, the benefits of a short-term strategy include the possibility of reproducing with several women at the same time, while the costs are that he might gain a reputation as a 'womanizer' or face injury or death at the hands of a jealous rival. For the reasons outlined above, men are more likely than women to pursue short-term strategies, as the costs associated with short-term strategies are higher for women and the benefits are lower (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). Because women and men have a choice in when to use these mating strategies, it is important that they are able to identify whether a potential mate is using a short-term or long-term mating strategy.

Although little research has been conducted on what behavioral characteristics actually signal a female's interest in mating (Ahmad & Fisher, 2010; Grammer, Kruck, Juette, & Fink, 2000), a few characteristics have emerged. For example, in a study using a target and a confederate, Stilman and Maner (2009) found that participants accurately identified an opposite sex person's sociosexuality (i.e., how comfortable one is in engaging in short-term mating, see Simpson & Gangestad, 1991) by how often the target engaged in certain behaviors. For example, they found that people were able to determine the target's sociosexuality by attending to how often the individual gazed at a confederate, how much time they spent trying to solve a puzzle (as opposed to looking at the confederate), and the number of eyebrow flashes the target displayed. They also found, however, that a few behaviors led participants to misidentify sociosexuality. These behaviors included smiling, laughing, closeness to the confederate, and the confederate's attractiveness and provocativeness of dress (Stilman & Maner, 2009).

In relation to personality, Schmitt and Shackleford (2008) found that the Big Five traits of extraversion, neuroticism, and openness to experience were positively correlated with short-term mating, while agreeableness and conscientiousness were negatively correlated with short-term mating. They suggest that one can accurately determine an individual's sociosexuality based on the personality characteristics they display. In our study, we ask participants to predict behaviors implying mating strategy or sociosexuality based on passages that describe the personality characteristics of the character.

Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology – ISSN 1933-5377 – Volume 4(4). 2010.

320

Finally, orientation towards sexual relations has been found to relate to self-monitoring. Individuals with high self-monitoring tend to not establish committed relationships and maintain an unrestrictive sexual orientation (Snyder & Simpson, 1984; Snyder, Simpson, & Gangestad, 1986). In contrast, individuals with low self-monitoring tend to establish committed relationships and maintain a restrictive sexual orientation. Additionally, self-monitoring has been documented to influence individuals' mate preferences. High self-monitors seek to obtain mates who can provide rewarding outcomes such as social approval, status, or new opportunities. In contrast, low self-monitors, seek mates for mutual satisfaction, and aim to derive pleasure from simply being with their partners (Jones, 1993; Rempel, Holmes, & Zanna, 1985). According to Jones (1993), this correlation leads high self-monitors to prefer partners with high social status, physical attractiveness, financial resources, and sex appeal, and low self-monitors to prefer partners with loyalty, honesty, kindness, and similar beliefs and education. Therefore, in the current study, we also examine self-monitoring in relation to character preference.

Current Study

We propose that men will readily identify which mating strategy women are pursuing, given that correctly doing so will prevent them from misallocating energy, time, and resources. Thus, we hypothesize that men will know that "lover" characters are those who would be interested in short-term matings, whereas "mother" characters would be more appropriate choices for long-term relationships. Furthermore, given that women compete with other women for potential mates, they should also assess and comprehend the mating strategies of their rivals. Therefore, we hypothesize that women will be able to correctly identify that "lover" characters are pursuing a short-term strategy, and "mother" characters are pursuing a long-term strategy.

In addition, we were curious about whether participants would be able to identify personality characteristics related to sociosexuality, such as how much men and women would like the various characters, and their views about their ability to be good friends (agreeableness) or to maintain stable careers (conscientiousness). We expect that 'mothers' would score higher on measures that suggest agreeableness and conscientiousness, which would suggest a lower SOI.

Finally, given that participants' SOI and self-monitoring relate to relationship preference, as reviewed above, we examine these interpersonal characteristics in conjunction with character identification (i.e., selecting whether a "mother" *vs* a "lover" would be most interesting in a short-term relationship) and preference.

Methods

Participants

A total of 36 men (age in years $M = 19.33$, $SD = 1.01$) and 51 women (age $M = 20.12$, $SD = 2.30$), recruited from psychology courses at a private New England university, participated in this study. The vast majority of the participants (92%) considered themselves to be Caucasian. All participants reported that they were heterosexual. Approximately 67% of men stated that they were currently single, 25% were dating one person exclusively, and 8% were dating one or more people casually. For

Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology – ISSN 1933-5377 – Volume 4(4). 2010.

321

women, 43% were single, 45% were dating one person exclusively, and 12% were dating one or more people casually. This research was approved by the University's Institutional Review Board.

Materials

Responses to Female Literary Characters Survey. This survey contained descriptions of characters from Jane Austen novels and asked participants to answer questions about the characters. We compiled three character descriptions that encompass the long-term "mother" mating strategy: Jane Bennett (*Pride and Prejudice*), Mary Crawford (*Mansfield Park*), and Fanny Price (*Mansfield Park*). We also included three characters to represent the short-term "lover" mating strategy: Lydia Bennett (*Pride and Prejudice*), Emma Woodhouse (*Emma*), and Maria Bertram (*Mansfield Park*). The writing style of Austen was such that she would describe characters incrementally, and thus, to obtain sufficient content, we assembled these brief expressions into a longer descriptive portrayal. This method was used for some of the character depictions in previous studies (e.g., Kruger, Fisher & Jobling, 2003).

Below are examples of the passages.

"She was a most beloved sister and a willing listener. Her feelings, though fervent, were little displayed, and there was a constant complacency in her angelic air and manner. Her look and manner were open, cheerful and engaging, an undiminished beauty with good sense and disposition. She would willingly have gone throughout the world without believing that wickedness existed. Her delicate sense of honour, was matched with the most generous and forgiving heart in the world." -- Jane Bennett (mother)

"She was always unguarded and often uncivil. She had an imprudent, wild giddiness and although self-willed and careless, she would scarcely give them a hearing. She was ignorant, idle, vain, and absolutely uncontrolled. While there was an officer in town, she would flirt with him. She would flirt, in the worse and meanest degree of flirtation, and be the most determined flirt. She saw herself as the object of attention. She seldom listened to anybody for more than half a minute, and never intended to marry at all." -- Lydia Bennett (lover)

The descriptions were presented such that participants were presented with three sets (counterbalanced): Jane *vs* Lydia, Emma *vs* Mary, and Fanny *vs* Maria. The participants answered, using a seven-point bipolar scale (1 = not at all and 7 = completely) the questions: to what extent do you think you would like this person, to what extent would this person like you, and how well would you get along with this person. Male participants, only, were also asked: how likely do you think you would be to hook-up (sexually) with this person for a one-night stand, to what extent would you like to form a short-term relationship with this person, to what extent would you like to form a long-term committed relationship with this person, and how well do the personality characteristics described in this passage describe a woman you would be

Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology – ISSN 1933-5377 – Volume 4(4). 2010.

322

attracted to? Female participants, only, were asked: how comfortable would you be with this person accompanying your boyfriend on a three-week trip to another city, how likely is this person to form and maintain a good career, to what extent could this person form a long-term committed relationship, and how well do the personality characteristics describe in this passage describe you?

Participants then completed a series of forced-choice items: with which person would you prefer to attend a party, which person would make a better mother, which person would be better with children, and which person would you prefer to see engaged to your hypothetical 25-year-old son?

Male participants, only, were additionally asked: which person would you prefer to go with on a formal date, to have sexual relations with, to marry, which person would your parent(s) prefer you to marry, with whom would a romantic relationship last longer, which person would be more likely to have an affair (cheat on you), and assuming you are already in a romantic relationship, with which person would you prefer to have an affair (cheat on your mate with)? Female participants, only, were additionally asked: which person do you think men would prefer to go with on a formal date, to have sexual relations, to have an affair (cheat on mate with), which person would be more likely to have an affair (cheat on her mate), and which person would have sex with more individuals over her lifetime

Self-Monitoring Scale (SM; Synder, 1974). The Self-Monitoring Scale consists of 25 items for which the participant responds true or false with respect to his or her self-perceived behavior and attitudes. This survey measures one's ability to change his or her behavior depending on the particular situation; thus, it refers to responsiveness to social and interpersonal cues of situations. A high self-monitor would be a person who easily changes with the situation, while a low-self monitor tends to be very consistent across situations.

Sociosexual Orientation Inventory (SOI; Simpson & Gangestad, 1991). The SOI is a 7-item questionnaire measuring an individual's willingness to engage in casual sex. Items include number of sexual partners in the past year, number of sexual partners forecasted in the next five years, number of "one-night stands," how frequently the participant fantasizes about sexual relations with someone other than his or her current partner, and three items, scored on a 9-point scale (1= I strongly disagree, 9= I strongly agree) concerning the appropriateness of sex without love, imagined comfort towards "casual" sex, and necessity of close attachment prior to sexual intercourse. Higher scores reflect an unrestrictive sociosexual orientation, (i.e., openness to "casual" sex) while lower scores reflect a restrictive sociosexual orientation.

Procedure

Participants were recruited from psychology courses at a small private university in New England. They received extra credit in their psychology course for participation. Participants were brought in groups into a large classroom and spaced around the room to ensure privacy. Each participant was given a packet of questionnaires including the consent form, the demographic questionnaire and the materials described above. After the participants were finished, they were given a debriefing statement and were thanked for their time.

Results

Scale Questions

In order to analyze how men and women each perceived the mating strategy of the character, multivariate analyses of covariance (MANCOVA) were performed. We conducted separate analyses for men and women, and for each of the character comparisons. Thus, six MANCOVA models were created; three (Jane *vs* Lydia, Emma *vs* Mary, and Fanny *vs* Maria) for men and three for women. For these analyses, the dependent variables were the difference scores calculated for each question, by passage comparison. Scores for SOI (mean) and SM (sum) were used as covariates.

For the male participants, the comparison of Jane *vs* Lydia revealed SOI was a significant covariate, $F(7,24) = 3.86$, $p = .006$, as was SM, $F(7,24) = 3.45$, $p = .01$. As can be seen in Table 1, men liked and wanted to form relationships with the "mother" character. Men's SOI interacted with many of the questions, however, such that men who were low in SOI were more likely to choose the "mother" character. Self-monitoring interacted with one question regarding whether the participant would want to form a short-term relationship; men with high SM were more likely to choose the "lover" character.

For women, the comparison of Jane *vs* Lydia yielded very similar findings to the men's responses. Women generally liked and thought more positively of the "mother" character. For women, SM ($F(7,38) = 1.10$, $p = .39$) and SOI ($F(7,38) = 2.05$, $p = .07$) did not significantly interact (see Table 2) with any of the items.

For the comparison of Maria *vs* Fanny, we found mixed results. Self-monitoring was a significant covariate for the overall model, $F(7,23) = 2.58$, $p = .04$. In general, men liked the "mother" character more than the "lover" character, and expressed a preference to sexually hook-up with the "lover" character (see Table 1). Men who had low SM were more prone to like the "mother" character, while those with high SM were more prone to report wanting to sexually hook-up with the "lover" character. There was no significant interaction between SOI and any item, $F(7,23) = 1.73$, $p = .15$. For women, we found no differences in how participants perceived the "mother" *vs* "lover" character (see Table 2). In addition, for this comparison, women's self-monitoring was not a significant covariate, $F(7,36) = .74$, $p = .64$, nor was their SOI, $F(7,36) = 1.21$, $p = .32$.

Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology – ISSN 1933-5377 – Volume 4(4). 2010.

324

Table 1. Male Responses to Scale Questions

	Jane *vs* Lydia	Dif.	Emma *vs* Mary	Dif.	Maria *vs* Fanny	Dif.
To what extent do you think you would like this person?	M#	2.42	DRAW	-0.28	DRAW	-1.39
To what extent do you think this person would like you?	M#	0.81	DRAW*	-1.2	M*	-2.12
How well do you think you would get along well with this person?	M#	2.84	DRAW	0.84	DRAW	-0.88
How likely do you think you would be to hook-up (sexually) with this person for a one-night stand?	DRAW	0.42	DRAW	-0.56	L*	0.45
To what extent would like to form a short-term relationship with this person?	M*	1.21	DRAW	-0.56	DRAW	-0.12
To what extent would you like to form a long-term committed relationship with this person?	M#	2.03	DRAW	0	DRAW*	-1.85
How well do the personality characteristics described in this passage describe a woman you would be attracted to?	M#	2.58	DRAW	-0.59	DRAW*	-1.45

Note: Difference in scale ratings for mother versus lover character. M indicates that the mother character was significantly favored, $p<.05$; L indicates that the lover character was significantly favored, $p<.05$. * indicates an interaction with SM, # indicates an interaction with SOI.

Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology – ISSN 1933-5377 – Volume 4(4). 2010.

325

Table 2. Female Responses to Scale Questions

	Jane *vs* **Lydia**	**Dif.**	**Emma** *vs* **Mary**	**Dif.**	**Maria** *vs* **Fanny**	**Dif.**
To what extent do you think you would like this person?	M	3.66	DRAW	-0.36	DRAW	-0.33
To what extent do you think this person would like you?	M	2.81	DRAW	-0.04	DRAW	-0.24
How well do you think you would get along well with this person?	M	3.55	DRAW	-0.64	DRAW	-0.26
How comfortable would you be with this person accompanying your boyfriend on a three-week trip to another city?	DRAW	2.02	DRAW	-0.13	DRAW	-0.98
How likely is this person to form and maintain a good career?	M	3.66	DRAW	-0.27	DRAW	-0.1
To what extent would this person be able to form a long-term committed relationship?	M	3.72	DRAW	-0.96	DRAW	-0.17
How well do the personality characteristics described in this passage describe you?	M	2.77	DRAW	-0.47	DRAW	-0.69

Note: Difference in scale ratings for mother versus lover character. M indicates that the mother character was significantly favored, $p<.05$; L indicates that the lover character was significantly favored, $p<.05$.

Forced Choice Questions

In addition to the scale questions, we analyzed the forced choice questions using binomial probability testing to determine whether the proportion of responses were significantly different from equivalency. Thus, we examined the total number of men and women who chose each character for each of the forced-choice items.

For the comparison of Jane *vs* Lydia, for men, the results were as expected: men indicated they were more likely to go out with, marry and have their parents choose the "mother" character for them to marry, while they preferred sexual relations with the "lover" character and believed the "lover" character would be more likely to cheat on them (see Table 3; note that we present the proportions such that it is those favoring the mother).

Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology – ISSN 1933-5377 – Volume 4(4). 2010.

326

Table 3. Proportion of Male Forced Choice Responses Favoring the Mother

Comparison	Jane *vs* Lydia	Emma *vs* Mary	Maria *vs* Fanny
With which person would you prefer to attend a party?	0.53	0.76	0.50
Which person would you prefer to go with on a formal date?	0.97 [M]	0.96 [M]	0.72 [M]
With which person would you prefer to have sexual relations?	0.42 [L]	0.42 [L]	0.28 [L]
Assuming you are already in a romantic relationship, with which person would you prefer to have an affair (cheat on your mate with)?	0.50	0.5	0.53
Which person would be more likely to have an affair (cheat on you)?	0.06 [L]	0.06 [L]	0.53
Which person would you prefer to marry?	0.89 [M]	0.89 [M]	0.5
Which person would your parent(s) prefer you to marry?	0.92 [M]	0.92 [M]	0.5
With whom would a romantic relationship last longer?	0.92 [M]	0.92 [M]	0.36
Which person would make a better mother?	0.75 [M]	0.75 [M]	0.50
Which person would you prefer to see engaged to your imaginary 25-year-old son?	0.86 [M]	0.86 [M]	0.64

Note: For the significant findings, [M] indicates that the mother character was favored; [L] indicates that the lover character was favored.

For this comparison, women also responded as expected, choosing the "lover" character as most likely to cheat on her partner and have more sexual partners. The women chose the "mother" character as being a better mother and being better with children (see Table 4; again note that we present the proportions favoring the mother).

For the comparison of Emma *vs* Mary, we found that men were more likely to choose the "mother" character to go on a date with and to marry, they believed she would make a better mother, and that she would make a relationship last longer. They chose the "lover" character as the one they would like to have sex with and would be more likely to cheat on them (see Table 3). Women, however, did not exhibit any significant differences in their choice of Emma *vs* Mary (see Table 4).

Finally, for the Maria *vs* Fanny comparison, men were more likely to choose the "mother" character for a formal date and the "lover" character to have a sexual relationship. For the remaining items, there was no difference between the "mother" character and "lover" character (see Table 3). Women chose the "lover" character as more likely to cheat on her partner, and as the character with whom men would rather have sex. They chose the "mother" character as being more likely to be the better mother, and better with children. In addition, they chose the "mother" character as the preferable wife to their imaginary 25-year-old son (see Table 4).

Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology – ISSN 1933-5377 – Volume 4(4). 2010.

327

Table 4. Proportion of Female Forced Choice Responses Favoring the Mother

Comparison	Jane *vs* Lydia	Emma *vs* Mary	Maria *vs* Fanny
With which person would you prefer to attend a party?	0.61	0.41	0.52
Which person do you think men would prefer to go with on a formal date?	0.86 [M]	0.46	0.42
With which person would you think men would prefer to have sexual relations with?	0.26 [L]	0.38	0.3 [L]
With which person would men prefer to have an affair with (cheat on mate with)?	0.08 [L]	0.44	0.44
Which person would be more likely to have an affair (cheat on her mate)?	0.06 [L]	0.6	0.34 [L]
Which person would have sex with more individuals over her lifetime?	0.16 [L]	0.44	0.4
Which person would be better with children?	0.94 [M]	0.36	0.74 [M]
Which person would make a better mother?	0.92 [M]	0.39	0.7 [M]
Which person would you prefer to see engaged to your imaginary 25-year old son?	0.06 [L]	0.47	0.71 [M]

Note: For the significant findings, [M] indicates that the mother character was favored; [L] indicates that the lover character was favored.

Discussion

The current study expands upon previous research that showed that college students are able to differentiate mating strategies of male characters in British Romantic literature (e.g., Kruger, Fisher & Jobling, 2003). Most of our analyses supported the hypothesis that both male and female college students are able to identify and distinguish between short and long-term mating strategies depicted by characters within the fictional works of Jane Austen. Thus, we also demonstrated that college students are able to differentiate between mating strategies of female characters, in texts written by women.

Both men and women generally chose the "mother" character as the better mother, the character they would like their imaginary 25-year-old son to marry, and the character that would strive to maintain a long-term romantic relationship. Men were more likely to choose the "lover" character as the character they would be interested in sexually 'hooking-up' with, and both men and women chose the "lover" character as being more likely to cheat on her partner. It seems that the "mother/lover" distinction is intuitive to both men and women, as evidenced by the responses given by participants. None of the descriptions used as stimuli mentioned motherhood or the character's interest or dealings with children, yet participants consistently chose the "mother" character as being the best in this regard.

A few of our analyses showed inconsistent results. It seems that the Jane/Lydia dichotomy was the most obvious and easy for participants to identify, as they were able

Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology – ISSN 1933-5377 – Volume 4(4). 2010.

328

to differentiate between the "mother" character and the "lover" character in the predicted manner. In the other two comparisons (Maria/Fanny and Emma/Mary) the lack of differentiation between the "mother" character and "lover" character may be due to the conflicting descriptions in the compiled passages. For example one passage reads:

> "She was indeed the pride and delight of them all, a perfectly flawless angel. She was the finest young woman in the country, with high spirit and strong passion, but wanted neither pride nor resolutions. *Her behavior to her prospective husband was careless and cold, she could not, did not, like him. She was preparing for matrimony with the misery of disappointed affection and contempt of the man she was to marry; she despised him, and loved another.*"

As seen in this passage, the ambiguity comes not from conflicting information about the type of mating strategy used, but that the author describes the character with positive adjectives in the first section and with negative adjectives in the second (italicized) section. This inconsistency may have made it difficult for students to differentiate between information regarding the mating strategy and information regarding the character's disposition. Future studies should consider using further truncated passages that do not confound the disposition of the character with the mating strategy used by the character.

Because we used a counter-balanced design in order to compare the mother/lover characters, there is the possibility that this design encouraged a comparison on questions that did not ask the participant to compare the two characters. For example, the question asking how much the participant likes the character could be influenced by the previous questions asking participants to compare the two characters.

One aspect of our results that deserve mention is how individual differences with respect to sociosexuality and self-monitoring influence perceptions of women's mating strategies. Women's sociosexuality and self-monitoring did not have a significant influence, whereas these measures did prove significant for men, for some of the comparisons. Men with low SOI, and those with high SM, were more likely to favor the mother, while men with higher SOI, and those with low SM, were more likely to favor the lover. Although these results were not seen in all comparisons, it is interesting that this pattern was evidenced for at least the Jane/Lydia contrast. It is sensible that men with high SOI were more interested in the lover, given that these individuals presumably focus on sexuality, rather than paternal skills, due to their unrestrictive nature. As for self-monitoring, the items that revealed an effect were those directly pertaining to a relationship (whether it be short or long term), and how much they thought a character would like them. Perhaps those men with high self-monitoring identified in some manner with the "lover" character, which impacted on their preference. Or, perhaps due to the relationship between self-monitoring and sociosexuality, these men, due to their sexual unrestrictiveness, they did in fact more readily comprehend the two mating strategies of the characters.

Although the work of Jane Austen is, of course fictional, it is intriguing that she managed to represent two common mating strategies used by women in her writing during the Georgian era. Without even mentioning sex, Austen depicts characters representative of women's short-term mating strategies. Even more interesting is the fact that college students are able to extrapolate this information from British Romantic

Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology – ISSN 1933-5377 – Volume 4(4). 2010.

329

Literature, written in a different style of English, and interpret and use the information for their own imaginary mating efforts.

In addition to refining passages, future work may develop more items specific to female reproductive strategies. As aforementioned, female strategies are not presumably the mirror image of male strategies, because the sexes face distinct costs and benefits stemming from short versus long-term relationships. It may be worthwhile to include additional items that are designed to assess behaviors that are more closely related to variation in female reproductive strategies than male reproductive strategies.

The results of this study generally support our hypotheses and our project contributes to the field of Literary Darwinism. Although most scholars within Literary Darwinism merely use evolutionary theory as a basis for standard qualitative literary interpretations, this project goes further in that it subjects a literary interpretation to the empirical testing of the sciences.

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330

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Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology – ISSN 1933-5377 – Volume 4(4). 2010.

331