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Social motives, attributions and expectations as predictors of the decision to participate in a speed-dating event

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Abstract

Two studies investigated the role of dispositional social approach and avoidance motives (i.e., what people generally desire and fear in social relationships) for the decision to participate in a speed-dating event. In a sample of $N = 205$ college students (Study 1), approach motives were positively and avoidance motives negatively associated with the decision to participate in a speed-dating event. Focusing on the underlying processes, Study 2 ($N = 153$) showed that approach and avoidance motives were differentially associated with attributions of acceptance and rejection experienced in a previous speed-dating scenario. The higher participants' approach motives were, the more they attributed acceptance to internal, stable, and global causes. Conversely, the higher participants' avoidance motives were, the more they attributed rejection to internal, stable, and global causes. Attributions, in turn, predicted expectations for an upcoming speed-dating event, and positive expectations positively predicted decision for participating in the speed-dating event. Thus, what people generally desire and fear in social relationships influence relationship initiation through differential attributions of previous social success and failure and thereby expectations for the upcoming social events.

Keywords: relationship initiation; motivation; attributions; expectations; speed-dating

Social Motives, Attributions and Expectations as Predictors of the Decision to Participate
in a Speed-Dating Event

One of the most important developmental tasks in young adulthood is to form a positive and stable romantic relationship (Arnett, 2000; Havighurst, 1972; Nikitin & Freund, 2008; Roisman, Masten, Coatsworth, & Tellegen, 2004). Not surprisingly, then, young adults are highly motivated to initiate romantic relationships (Buss, 1994; Wrosch & Heckhausen, 1999) and romantic relationships are among the most significant relationships in young adulthood (Antonucci, Fiori, Birditt, & Jackey, 2010; Takahashi, 2005).

There exists a large body of research on the initiation of romantic relationships (Sprecher, 2008). The majority of this literature addresses strategies of relationship initiation (e.g., Clark, Shaver, & Abrahams, 1999; Eastwick, Finkel, Mochon, & Ariely, 2007), the role of partners' similarity (e.g., Frazier, Byer, Fischer, Wright, & DeBord, 1996), and general theories of relationship initiation such as attachment theory or evolutionary theories (e.g., Creasey & Jarvis, 2008; Latty-Mann & Davis, 1996; Schmitt, 2008). Although social motives (i.e., what people generally desire for and fear of when entering a social situation) might be a powerful predictor of the decision to initiate social relationships in general, and romantic relationships in particular (Eiser & Fazio, 2008; Nurmi, Toivonen, Salmela-Aro, & Eronen, 1996), motivational research has largely neglected the role of social motives for relationship initiation.

Indirect evidence on the role of social motives comes from studies on self-esteem (Cameron, Stinson, Gaetz, & Balchen, 2010; Cameron, Stinson, & Wood, 2013; Stinson, et al., 2012): Typically, high (compared to low) self-esteem leads to initiation of romantic

relationships, particularly in situations that are ambivalent with regard to acceptance and rejection (e.g., Cameron, Stinson, Gaetz, & Balchen, 2010; Stinson, Cameron, & Robinson, 2015). This is the case because self-esteem (defined as a global self-evaluation; e.g., Leary & MacDonald, 2003) determines whether an ambivalent social cue is interpreted as a potential opportunity for acceptance or as a potential threat of rejection. For example, Cameron and colleagues (Cameron et al., 2010) demonstrated in a series of studies that persons with lower levels of self-esteem underestimated and persons with higher levels of self-esteem overestimated acceptance by potential romantic partners in ambivalent social situations. Cameron and colleagues argued that this is the case because persons with lower levels of self-esteem are motivated to avoid rejection and, thus, protect themselves from rejection by underestimating acceptance by potential romantic partners, whereas persons with higher levels of self-esteem are motivated to promote new relationships and, thus, overestimate acceptance.

Supporting the notion that self-esteem is differentially linked to social approach and avoidance motivation, previous research found that high self-esteem is associated with relatively higher levels of social approach motivation (i.e., the motivation to approach social rewards) compared to social avoidance motivation (i.e., the motivation to avoid social threats), whereas low self-esteem is associated with relatively lower levels of social approach compared to avoidance motivation (Heimpel, Elliot, & Wood, 2006). Consequently, social approach motivation should facilitate and social avoidance motivation should hinder the initiation of romantic relationships. The present research tests this hypothesis. In addition, the present research investigates possible mechanisms that underlie the differential association of social approach and avoidance motivation

1 with relationship initiation. Social approach and social avoidance motivation are
2 conceptualized as two independent motivational orientations that are incentivized by
3 different outcomes: Whereas social approach motivation is driven by the presence or
4 absence of positive social outcomes, social avoidance motivation is driven by the
5 presence or absence of negative social outcomes (e.g., Gable & Berkman, 2008; Nikitin
6 & Schoch, 2014; see also Higgins, 1998).

7 In the current studies, we hypothesize that *social approach motives* (i.e., the
8 dispositional motivation to approach positive social outcomes) and *social avoidance*
9 *motives* (i.e., the dispositional motivation to avoid negative social outcomes; Gable &
10 Berkman, 2008; Mehrabian, 1994) predict relationship initiation through different
11 mechanisms. We propose that social approach motives predict relationship initiation
12 because they are associated with expectations of a successful social interaction based on
13 attributions of previous positive experiences with similar situations. In contrast, we posit
14 that social avoidance motives predict relationship initiation because they are related to
15 expectations of a negative social interaction based on attributions of previous negative
16 experiences with similar situations. In the current studies, we investigated how perceived
17 social rewards and social threats translate into relationship initiation dependent on
18 people's social approach and avoidance motives. In doing so, the present research
19 contributes to understanding the motivational underpinnings of relationship initiation and
20 their underlying cognitive mechanisms (i.e., attributions and expectations).

21 We tested our research questions using the sample case of speed dating, as the
22 speed-dating paradigm seems to be particularly well-suited for the study of relationship
23 initiation (Eastwick & Finkel, 2008). Study 1 tested whether social approach and social

1 avoidance motives predict the decision to participate in a speed-dating event. Study 2
2 focused on mechanisms underlying the motive-related decision: attributions and
3 expectations.

4 **The Role of Social Approach and Avoidance Motives for Relationship Initiation**

5 The initiation of a romantic relationship involves complex decision making (see
6 review by Joel, MacDonald, & Plaks, 2013) requiring the weighing of the benefits (the
7 possibility to be accepted and loved) and the costs of the decision (the possibility to be
8 rejected and hurt; McClure, Lydon, Baccus, & Baldwin, 2010; Murray, Holmes, &
9 Collins, 2006).

10 People differ in their relative focus on possible costs and benefits of a relationship
11 initiation based on their social motives. Social approach motives are generally associated
12 with a focus on positive cues in social situations. For example, Gable and Poore (2008)
13 demonstrated that when people evaluate their relationships, persons high in social
14 approach motives weigh positive features of their relationship more heavily than
15 individuals low in approach motives. In contrast, social avoidance motives were not
16 associated with a focus on positive features of the relationship. Similarly, Nikitin,
17 Burgermeister, and Freund (2012) found in a diary study that social approach (but not
18 avoidance) motives predicted a positive perception of everyday social interactions. Thus,
19 a person high in social approach motives should be more attracted by possible benefits
20 (affiliation and love) in his or her decision to initiate a romantic relationship than a person
21 low in social approach motives. Consequently, social approach motives should be
22 positively associated with the decision to enter a situation that entails the possibility to
23 initiate a romantic relationship. In line with this hypothesis, previous research found that

1 the expectation of positive outcomes is a powerful predictor of the decision to get in
2 touch with other people (Anthony, Wood, & Holmes, 2007; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959).
3 Moreover, people who attended a speed-dating event in a study by McClure and
4 colleagues (McClure et al., 2010) were lower on insecure-avoidant attachment style
5 (which is negatively associated with social approach motives, see Nikitin & Freund,
6 2010, Study 1) than people who did not attend a speed-dating event.

7 In contrast to social approach motives, social avoidance motives are associated
8 with a focus on negative social cues. In the study by Gable and Poore (2008), participants
9 high in social avoidance motives weighed negative features of their relationships more
10 heavily than persons low in social avoidance motives. In contrast, social approach
11 motives were not associated with a focus on negative features of the relationship.
12 Similarly, social avoidance (but not approach) motives predicted negative cognitions
13 about daily social interactions (Nikitin et al., 2012) and negative outcomes in social
14 events, e.g., being rejected in speed-dating events (McClure et al., 2010). Thus, a person
15 high in social avoidance motives should be more concerned with possible costs such as
16 rejection and pain in his or her decision to initiate a romantic relationship than a person
17 low in social avoidance motives. Consequently, social avoidance motives should be
18 negatively associated with the decision to initiate a romantic relationship. In line with this
19 hypothesis, people who have negative expectations for an outcome (e.g., who think about
20 possible failure) avoid risk decisions (Leder, Florack, & Keller, 2013; Stinson, Cameron,
21 & Robinson, 2014). As the initiation of a romantic relationship bears the risk of rejection
22 (e.g., MacDonald & Leary, 2005; Murray et al., 2006), people high in social avoidance
23 motives should decide against it more often than people low in social avoidance motives.¹

Study 1 tested these hypotheses. Study 2 focused on mechanisms underlying the differential prediction of social approach and avoidance motives for the initialization of a romantic relationship: attributions and expectations.

Attributions and Expectations as Underlying Mechanisms

Expectations for future social situations are heavily influenced by previous experiences in similar situations (e.g., Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). This association is moderated by the attribution of the causes of the previous social experiences (Anderson & Jennings, 1980; Brodt & Zimbardo, 1981; Sedikides & Alicke, 2012). The central dimensions of causal attributions are internality, stability, and globality (Heider, 1958; Weiner et al., 1987). *Internality* refers to whether the cause of an outcome is located within the person (internal) or in the situation or other persons (external). *Stability* refers to whether the cause of an outcome is relatively temporary (variable) or permanent (stable). *Globality* refers to whether the cause of an outcome is specific to a given situation (specific) or holds across various situations (global). The attribution of positive events to internal (vs. external), stable (vs. variable), and global (vs. specific) causes and the attribution of negative events to external (vs. internal), variable (vs. stable), and specific (vs. global) causes are associated with positive expectations for similar future situations (Mezulis, Abramson, Hyde, & Hankin, 2004). This is the case because attributing positive events to internal, stable, and global causes (such as ability or personality) fosters positive views of oneself (Taylor & Brown, 1988). Such a positive self-concept, in turn, increases people's confidence that they will master similar situations in the future. In contrast, attributing negative events to internal, stable, and global causes (such as lack of ability or personality flaws) leads to pessimism and hopelessness that are

1 associated with the expectation for negative events are likely to recur in the future across
2 a wide variety of domains (Abramson, Metalsky, & Alloy, 1989).

3 Why do some people attribute positive social outcomes (such as being liked) to
4 internal, stable, and global causes while others are prone to attribute negative social
5 outcomes (such as being rejected) in this manner? Based on the literature on social
6 motives, we posit that social approach and avoidance motives are important for the
7 attributions of positive and negative social outcomes. As discussed above, social
8 approach motives are associated with a focus on potential positive outcomes. When these
9 positive outcomes actually occur, people are more likely to attribute them to internal (vs.
10 external), stable (vs. variable), and global (vs. specific) causes (Alden, 1986). This is the
11 case because causal attributions operate as a self-verification process. They help to
12 maintain a consistent sense of self and the world (Alden, 1986). The general view
13 associated with social approach motives is that social situations are mostly positive
14 (corresponding to stable and global attribution) and that one is a likable person
15 (corresponding to internal attribution; Mehrabian, 1994). In the case of a positive social
16 outcome, this general view is affirmed and, consequently, people attribute the outcome to
17 internal (vs. external), stable (vs. variable), and global (vs. specific) causes. Similarly,
18 when the negative outcomes occur that people high in social avoidance motives fear,
19 people are likely to attribute them to internal, stable, and global causes. Again, this
20 pattern of causal attributions helps to maintain a consistent sense of self and the world,
21 even if it is a negative one (Alden, 1986). In line with these hypotheses, Schoch and
22 colleagues (2015) found that social approach (but not avoidance) motives predict

1 attributions of social acceptance, whereas social avoidance (but not approach) motives
2 predict attributions of social rejection.

3 Figure 1 shows the hypothesized relationships between social motives,
4 attributions and expectations and speed-dating participation. To summarize, as shown in
5 Figure 1, we hypothesize that social approach and avoidance motives predict speed-
6 dating participation (Study 1). Regarding the mechanisms underlying the effects of social
7 motives on speed-dating participation, we hypothesize that social approach and avoidance
8 motives predict attributions, attributions predict expectations, and expectations, in turn,
9 predict speed-dating participation (Study 2). Specifically, social approach motives predict
10 attributions of a positive social outcome (i.e., acceptance in a speed-dating event),
11 whereas social avoidance motives predict attributions of a negative social outcome (i.e.,
12 rejection in a speed-dating event). These different attributions should lead to different
13 expectations for similar future situations (i.e., an upcoming speed-dating event). The
14 more people attribute acceptance to internal, stable, and global causes, the more they
15 should expect acceptance in a similar future situation. The more they attribute rejection to
16 internal, stable, and global causes, the more they should expect rejection in a similar
17 future situation. Finally, we expect to replicate the previous finding that expectations for
18 an upcoming social situation predict people's willingness to enter this situation (Anthony
19 et al., 2007).

20 Note, that we do not expect that social approach motives predict attributions of
21 rejection and that social avoidance motives predict attributions of acceptance. This
22 assumption is based on the existing empirical evidence demonstrating that social
23 approach motives are particularly predictive in positive social situations, whereas social

avoidance motives are particularly predictive in negative social situations (Gable & Poore, 2008; Nikitin et al., 2012; Schoch et al., 2015; Strachman & Gable, 2006).

Study 1

Method

Participants. Participants were recruited through an e-mail service for students. The sample consisted of college students between 18 and 30 years. $N = 258$ participants completed the online questionnaire. Data of 53 participants were excluded because these participants were not single. The final sample consisted of $N = 205$ students (age $M = 23.18$ years, $SD = 3.23$, 49% women). Very few of the participants had previous experience with speed dating (1.5%).²

Procedure. After providing written informed consent, a sample of college students who were currently single completed an online questionnaire assessing their social approach and avoidance motives (run by www.limesurvey.org). After completing the questionnaire, the students decided whether—as a way of compensating participation in the study—they wanted to take part in a speed-dating event (that was conducted a few weeks later by our lab). To prevent a possible selection bias, speed dating was not mentioned before completion of the questionnaire. In addition, all participants could take part in a raffle for three train vouchers worth 50 Swiss francs each (approximately 51 USD). After participation, they were fully debriefed. Based on the checklist to self-assess studies concerning their ethical safety from the ethics committee of the local university, the present research was classified as safe and exempt from further review.

Measurement of social approach and avoidance motives. We used the German version of the Mehrabian Affiliative Tendency and Sensitivity to Rejection Scales to

1 assess social approach and avoidance motives (Mehrabian, 1970; German version:
2 Sokolowski, 1986). A sample item of the Affiliative Tendency Scale is “I like to make as
3 many friends as I can.” A sample item of the Rejection Sensitivity Scale is “I prefer not
4 to go to a place if I know that some of the people who will be there don’t like me.” The
5 scales are a commonly used tool for assessing dispositional social approach and
6 avoidance motives, and has good reliability and validity (e.g., Gable, Reis, & Elliot,
7 2003; Nikitin et al., 2012; Strachman & Gable, 2006). For reasons of economy, we used a
8 short version of the scales, each with eight items of the highest loadings based on a
9 previous study (Nikitin & Freund, 2010, Study 1; see Table S1 in the Supplemental
10 Materials for the factor analysis). Response scales ranged from 0 (strongly disagree) to 6
11 (strongly agree). The internal consistency was Cronbach’s $\alpha = .72$ for approach motives
12 ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 0.93$) and $\alpha = .61$ ($M = 3.19$, $SD = 0.86$) for avoidance motives.
13 Approach and avoidance motives were not significantly correlated ($r = -.10$, $p = .18$).

14 **Measurement of decision for/against participation in speed dating.** Participants
15 had the possibility to participate in a speed-dating event after completing the
16 questionnaire. The instruction was as follows: “The questionnaire is now completed.
17 Thank you very much for your participation! As a thank-you, you have the possibility to
18 take part in a responsibly organized, free-of-charge speed-dating event worth 70 Swiss
19 francs with other college students aged between 18 and 30 years.” For those who were
20 not familiar with speed dating, a short description of the procedure was added.
21 Participants were requested to click “Yes” or “No” dependent on whether they wanted to
22 participate or not. About one third ($n = 67$) of the participants decided to participate in the
23 event.

1 **Method**

2 **Participants.** Participants were recruited through the participant server at the
3 university. We approached students between 18 and 30 years who were currently single.
4 $N = 182$ participants completed the online questionnaire. Data of 26 participants were
5 excluded because these participants did not fulfill the above criteria. Another three
6 participants were excluded because they failed to respond correctly to one of two control
7 questions (detailed information is provided below). The final sample consisted of $N = 153$
8 single young adults (age $M = 22.42$ years, $SD = 2.70$, 73% women).³ Very few of the
9 participants had experience with speed dating (3.9%).⁴

10 **Procedure.** Participants first gave written informed consent and then filled out the
11 questionnaire on social motives. Subsequently, participants read a hypothetical speed-
12 dating scenario that included a manipulation of acceptance or rejection, respectively.
13 After the manipulation, participants rated the causes of the acceptance or rejection in the
14 hypothetical speed-dating scenario on the attributional dimensions of internality, stability,
15 and globality. Finally, participants rated specific positive and negative expectations
16 concerning an actual upcoming speed-dating event and they decided if they wanted to
17 take part in it. The possibility to participate in the actual speed-dating event was not
18 mentioned before. An official speed-dating provider associated with the university
19 conducted the actual speed dating a few weeks later. As an additional compensation,
20 participants could take part in a raffle for 10 book vouchers worth 10 Swiss francs each
21 (approximately 10 USD). Descriptive statistics of the main variables of Study 2 and mean
22 differences between the acceptance and the rejection conditions are presented in Table 1.
23 Bivariate correlations among all main variables are presented in Table 2.

1 **Measurement of social approach and avoidance motives.** As in Study 1, the
2 Mehrabian Affiliative Tendency and Sensitivity to Rejection Scales assessed social
3 approach and avoidance motives. As the reliability of the avoidance motive subscale was
4 not optimal in Study 1, we used all items of the scales (25 each) in Study 2. Cronbach's α
5 was .79 for the Affiliative Tendency Scale and was .82 for the Sensitivity to Rejection
6 Scale (Cronbach's α for each experimental condition can be found in Table 2).

7 **Manipulation of social acceptance and rejection.** Acceptance and rejection
8 were manipulated via a hypothetical speed-dating situation. Schoch et al. (2015)
9 demonstrated that hypothetical scenarios can be used to effectively manipulate
10 participants' perceived acceptance and rejection in social situations. Participants read the
11 description of a speed-dating procedure and were then asked to imagine taking part in a
12 speed-dating event: "Please imagine having participated in a speed-dating event. Over the
13 course of this event, you got to know 10 persons of the opposite sex. Each date lasted
14 seven minutes. You liked four of these persons. You would like to meet them again and
15 selected them for further contact. You know that you only get their contact information if
16 there is a match between your and your partner's choice. Now you are waiting eagerly for
17 the result pondering the questions 'How many persons might have chosen me?' and 'How
18 many matches do I have?'" After reading this instruction, participants were randomly
19 assigned to receiving either a fictitious *acceptance feedback* ("You wanted to get to know
20 four persons—all of them also wanted to get to know you."; $n = 78$) or a fictitious
21 *rejection feedback* ("You wanted to get to know four persons—none of them wanted to
22 get to know you."; $n = 75$). To ensure that participants engaged in imagining the speed-

1 dating situation, we asked them to take some notes about their thoughts and hypothetical
2 behavior after each step of the manipulation.

3 **Manipulation check.** To test whether the manipulation of social acceptance and
4 rejection was successful, we asked participants how successful the imagined speed dating
5 was for them. Participants responded on a scale ranging from 0 (not successful at all) to 6
6 (very successful). Participants reported significantly more success in the acceptance
7 condition ($M = 5.60$, $SD = 0.67$) than in the rejection condition ($M = 0.94$, $SD = 1.21$),
8 $t(151) = 29.63$, $p < .001$, $d = 4.82$.

9 **Measurement of Attributions.** An adapted version of the Attributional Style
10 Questionnaire for Adults (Pope, Stiensmeier-Pelster, & Pelster, 2005) assessed
11 attributions of acceptance and rejection, respectively (see also Schoch et al., 2015). After
12 the hypothetical feedback, participants wrote down the main cause of their success or
13 failure in the speed-dating scenario. They rated this cause on the dimensions of internality
14 (e.g., “The cause has something to do with circumstances or other persons” vs. “The
15 cause has something to do with me”), stability (e.g., “The cause will change over time”
16 vs. “The cause will be stable over time”), and globality (e.g., “The cause applies only to
17 this situation” vs. “The cause applies to many other situations”). Each dimension was
18 assessed with two single items. Response scales ranged from -3 (external, variable,
19 specific) to +3 (internal, stable, global). Cronbach’s α was .78, .51, .77, and .83 for the
20 internality dimension, stability dimension, globality dimension, and the whole scale,
21 respectively (Cronbach’s α for each experimental condition can be found in Table 1).

22 **Measurement of specific expectations.** Specific expectations of an upcoming
23 actual speed-dating event were assessed with eight self-created items. Four items

1 assessed positive expectations (“I expect ...” “... that others will accept me”, “... that
2 others will like me”, “... to establish contact with many people”, “... to get on well with
3 others”), four items assessed negative expectations (“I expect ...” “... that others are not
4 interested in me”, “... that others will reject me”, “... that hardly anybody will choose
5 me”, “... to be rejected”). Cronbach’s α was .81 for the positive expectations and .87 for
6 the negative expectations (Cronbach’s α for each experimental condition can be found in
7 Table 2).

8 **Measurement of decision for/against participation in speed dating.** The
9 instruction regarding the decision for or against participating in an actual speed-dating
10 event was the same as in Study 1. In the acceptance condition, 26 of 78 (33%)
11 participants decided for attending the speed dating event, and 30 of 75 (40%) in the
12 rejection condition. The difference between acceptance and rejection condition was not
13 statistically significant, $\chi^2(1,153) = 0.39, p = .41$.

14 **Control items.** One control item (“How many persons did you select for further
15 contact?” asked directly after the manipulation of acceptance/rejection) identified
16 participants who did not read the hypothetical scenario carefully. Participants who did not
17 respond correctly ($n = 3$) were excluded from the analyses.

18 To identify how realistic the speed-dating scenario was, we used two items (“How
19 realistic was the speed-dating scenario for you?”, “How well could you imagine the
20 speed-dating scenario?”). Response scales ranged from 0 (not at all) to 6 (very).
21 Participants experienced the hypothetical speed-dating scenario as more realistic than
22 unrealistic ($M = 3.56, SD = 1.43$) and could imagine it relatively well ($M = 4.38, SD =$
23 1.30). Sample means were significantly above the scale center of 3 (realism: $t[152] =$

4.86, $p < .001$, $d = 0.79$; imaginability: $t[152] = 13.09$, $p < .001$, $d = 2.12$). We regressed the perceived realism and imaginability respectively on experimental condition, approach social motives, and negative social motives. The results showed that none of the main effects of condition, main effects of social motives, or their interaction effects was significant ($ps > .09$), which indicate that realism and imaginability did not vary with condition or social motives.

Results

Data-analytical strategy. We included social approach and avoidance motives, attributions, positive expectations, and negative expectations in a multiple-group latent structural equation model for social acceptance (Group 1) and social rejection (Group 2) to test whether the hypothesized motives–attributions–expectations link differs between the two conditions (see Figure 1). In order to reduce the number of parameters, we used the item parceling method (Little, Cunningham, Shahar, & Widaman, 2002) to build the latent variables for social approach and avoidance motives (e.g., Elliot & Thrash, 2002; Marsh, Hau, Balla, & Grayson, 1998; Neria, Vizcaino, & Jones, 2016; Wang, Shim, & Wolters, 2017). Similarly, the three attribution dimensions internality, stability, and globality were aggregated into one latent variable, a widely used procedure in attributional research (e.g., Ciarrochi & Heaven, 2008; Hawkins & Miller, 2003; Sweeney, Anderson, & Bailey, 1986). Finally, the four manifest variables of the positive-expectations scale were used to build the latent variable “positive expectations,” and the four manifest variables of the negative-expectation scale were used to build the latent variable “negative expectations” (see Table 3 for the loadings of the manifest variables on the latent variables). All variables were z-standardized, in order to reduce the effects of

cross-variable variation in measure unit and multicollinearity among these variables, before they were included in the model. Analyses were conducted using *lavaan* (Rosseel, 2012), an R-based (R Development Core Team, 2012) package for structural equation modeling.

Speed-dating participation decision was not included in the model because it was a nominal measure (yes or no). To our knowledge, there is no well-established method or statistical package to handle complex mediation or structural equation models with nominal outcome (or endogenous) variables. Thus, we tested for our hypotheses with two separate models: First, we built a structural equation model to examine the relationship among social motives (social approach and avoidance motives), attributions, and expectations (positive expectations and negative expectations); Second, we employed a binary logistic regression model to test the relationship between positive/negative expectations with decision for/against speed-dating participation.

Social motives and attributions as predictors of specific expectations. The multiple-group latent structural equation model yielded fair goodness-of-fit indices, χ^2 ($df = 216, n_1 = 78, n_2 = 75$) = 247.30, $p = .07$, CFI = .94, TLI = .93, RMSEA = .044, SRMR = .071, indicating that the model overall well fit to the data of the acceptance and rejection conditions (e.g., Schreiber, Stage, King, Nora, & Barlow, 2006). Satisfactory goodness-of-fit indices were obtained if we modelled the data separately for the acceptance ($\chi^2 = 159.24, df = 109, p = .001$, CFI = .96, TLI = .95, RMSEA = .054, SRMR = .075) and rejection condition ($\chi^2 = 170.77, df = 109, p < .001$, CFI = .94, TLI = .93, RMSEA = .052, SRMR = .075). We also built an alternative multiple-group latent structural equation model, in which path coefficients were constrained to be equal between Group1 and

Group 2. The alternative model showed relatively poorer goodness of fit indices, χ^2 ($df = 224$) = 285.62, $p = .003$, CFI = .89, TLI = .87, RMSEA = .060, SRMR = .089, compared to the former multiple-group latent structural equation model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 38.32$, $\Delta df = 8$, $p < .01$). The results indicated that the relationships among social motives, attributions, and expectations significantly differed between the acceptance condition (Group 1) and the rejection condition (Group 2).

In the acceptance condition, as hypothesized, social approach motives predicted attributions of acceptance, which, in turn, positively predicted specific positive expectations and negatively predicted negative expectations for the upcoming speed-dating event (see Figure 1, upper line). In other words, the higher the approach motives were, the more participants tended to attribute the imagined acceptance in the speed-dating scenario to the composite score of internal (vs. external), stable (vs. variable), and global (vs. specific) causes. In turn, the more participants attributed acceptance to internal, stable, and global causes, the more they had positive expectations and the less they had negative expectations for an upcoming speed-dating event. Social avoidance motives did not significantly predict attributions of acceptance. Instead, social avoidance motives directly negatively predicted positive expectations and positively predicted negative expectations. The higher avoidance motives were, the lower were positive expectations and the higher were negative expectations for an upcoming speed-dating event.

In the rejection condition, social avoidance motives predicted attributions of rejection, which, in turn, predicted expectations for the upcoming speed-dating event (see Figure 1, lower line). In other words, the higher the avoidance motives were, the more

1 participants tended to attribute the imagined rejection in the speed-dating scenario to the
2 composite score of internal (vs. external), stable (vs. variable), and global (vs. specific)
3 causes. In turn, the more participants attributed rejection to internal, stable, and global
4 causes, the less positive expectations and the more negative expectations they had for an
5 upcoming speed-dating event. Social approach motives did not significantly predict
6 attributions of rejection. Instead, social approach motives directly predicted positive
7 expectations but not negative expectations. The higher approach motives were, the higher
8 were positive expectations for an upcoming speed-dating event.

9 **Social motives and expectations as predictors of speed-dating participation.**

10 As discussed above, it is inappropriate to incorporate speed-dating participation, a binary
11 nominal dependent variable, into the structural equation models. We thus performed
12 binary logistic regression analyses to examine the relationships between speed-dating
13 participation and its predictors. First, we regressed speed-dating participation on social
14 approach and avoidance motives. The results showed that the effects of social approach
15 and avoidance motives, as well as the interaction between social motives and condition,
16 were non-significant ($ps > .21$). Second, we regressed speed-dating participation on
17 negative and positive expectations. The results showed that speed-dating participation
18 was significantly predicted by positive expectations, $B = 0.93$, $SE = 0.37$, Wald = 6.23, p
19 = .01, $OR = 2.54$, 95% CI = [1.22, 5.30] but not by negative expectations, $B = 0.48$, $SE =$
20 0.29, Wald = 2.80, $p = .09$, $OR = 1.62$, 95% CI = [0.92, 2.86]. These effects were not
21 moderated by experimental condition ($ps > .38$). Overall, these results demonstrate a
22 significant indirect relationship between social motives and speed-dating participation via
23 attributions and positive expectations, despite the non-significant direct relationship.

Supplementary analyses. The results of the structural equation modeling and binary logistic regression, altogether, suggest significant indirect effects of social approach and avoidance motives on speed-dating participation via attribution and positive expectations despite non-significant total effects (i.e., the sum of indirect and direct effects). In order to more clearly illustrate the indirect effect of social motives on speed-dating participation via attributions and expectations, we built a comprehensive structural equation model (with speed-dating participation included as the outcome variable) as a supplementary analysis. In this model, we treated speed-dating participation as an ordered dichotomous measure (0 = no, 1 = yes; the higher score indicates a higher level of likelihood to participate the speed dating), such that the R-based package *lavaan* would be able to estimate the model (Rosseel, 2012). The results showed that speed-dating participation was significantly predicted by positive expectations, positive expectations were significantly predicted by attributions, and attributions were significantly predicted by social approach or avoidance motive (see Figure S1 in the Supplemental Materials). These results additionally support the indirect effect of social motives on speed-dating participation.

General Discussion

Although there exists a large body of research on the initiation of romantic relationships, the present two studies are the first to test the role of dispositional motives. These studies demonstrated that social approach and avoidance motives and their social-cognitive concomitants (i.e., attributions, expectations) play an important role for the decision to participate in a speed-dating event, a sample case of relationship initiation.

Overall, the current studies contribute to our understanding of motivational underpinnings of relationship initiation for research areas that are directly or indirectly associated with motivation. For example, the present findings show the need to specify the cognitive processes associated with high vs. low self-esteem. Assuming that high self-esteem is associated with high social approach motivation and low self-esteem with high social avoidance motivation, cognitive processes that lead to the initiation of a relationship in people high in self-esteem seem to differ from those low in self-esteem (see also Stinson, Cameron, & Robinson, 2014). Similarly, the present findings contribute to research on attachment styles that seem to be differentially associated with social approach and avoidance motives (e.g., Nikitin & Freund, 2010): whereas secure attachment is associated with a combination of high approach and low avoidance motives, insecure-fearful attachment is associated with a combination of high approach and high avoidance motives, and insecure-avoidant attachment with low approach motives. Based on the findings of the current studies, the three attachment styles might lead to relationship initiation through different cognitive mechanisms (for supporting results on avoidant attachment see Spielman, Maxwell, MacDonald, & Baratta, 2012).

Specifically, the current studies provide three main insights on the role of motives for relationship initiation: First, motive-related attributions are differential. In line with previous research showing that social approach motives are particularly predictive in positive social situations and that social avoidance motives are particularly predictive in negative social situations (Gable & Poore, 2008; Nikitin et al., 2012; Strachman & Gable, 2006), social approach motives in the present study predicted attributions of acceptance, whereas social avoidance motives predicted attributions of rejection (Schoch et al., 2015).

1 These results support the notion that social approach and avoidance motives are two
2 independent motivational systems that influence social behavior and experience through
3 different processes (Gable & Berkman, 2008; Nikitin & Freund, 2008). Thus, to predict
4 and explain behavior and experience in social relationships, both motives should be
5 considered. As Gable and Poore (2008) put it, researchers may sometimes be comparing
6 apples and oranges when examining the same outcome across people. For some people,
7 deciding to enter a situation that offers the possibility to initiate a romantic relationship
8 might originate mainly from the experience of previous positive experiences, for others
9 mainly from the experience of previous negative experiences. This has an important
10 implication for intervention strategies aiming at changing people's decisions to enter
11 social situations. Such attempts might be only successful when considering the
12 differential paths leading to this decision.

13 Social approach motives were directly associated with (positive but not negative)
14 expectations for a future speed-dating event in the rejection condition, and indirectly
15 associated with (positive and negative) expectations via attributions in the acceptance
16 condition. In contrast, social avoidance motives were directly associated with (positive
17 and negative) expectations for a future speed-dating event in the acceptance condition,
18 and indirectly associated with (positive and negative) expectations via attributions in the
19 rejection condition. These differential associations suggest that social motives modulate
20 attributions, and attributions, in turn, impact expectations in situations that are in focus of
21 the motives (i.e., an acceptance situation for social approach motives and a rejection
22 situation for social avoidance motives). Although not predicted, these associations also
23 illustrate how social motives operate in situations that are not in focus of the motives. It

1 seems that in such situations, the available information (acceptance or rejection) is not
2 integrated in the resulting evaluation (i.e., attributions) of the situation. Thus, the
3 adaptiveness of high social approach motives might be based both on crediting oneself
4 for social acceptance and “neglecting” social rejection. The low adaptiveness of high
5 social avoidance motives might be based both on blaming oneself for social rejection and
6 “neglecting” social acceptance. These post-hoc interpretations require to be directly
7 tested in future studies.

8 Third, the present research illustrates possible antecedents of different
9 attributional styles. Despite the long tradition of attributional research, relatively little
10 attention has been devoted to the individual precursors of attributions (with exception of
11 psychopathology; see a meta-analysis by Mezulis et al., 2004). Based on the present
12 findings, it seems that the dispositional motivation to approach positive social outcomes
13 and the dispositional motivation to avoid negative social outcomes are important
14 antecedents of individual differences in attributions of social events. Although people
15 generally tend to attribute positive events to internal, stable, and global causes, and
16 negative events to external, variable, and specific causes (Mezulis et al., 2004), this
17 attributional “bias” seems to be modulated by people’s motives. We argued previously
18 that the association between social approach and avoidance motives and attributions is
19 driven by the general view or, in other words, generalized (positive or negative)
20 expectations that people have in social situations (Mehrabian, 1994). A person who
21 generally expects that he or she succeeds in social situations will feel affirmed by a
22 positive social outcome. A person who generally expects that he or she fails in social
23 situations will feel affirmed by a negative social outcome. There is substantial research

on the effects of attributions on expectations (e.g., Anderson & Jennings, 1980; Brodt & Zimbardo, 1981; Sedikides & Alicke, 2012). In contrast, little is known about the role of expectations for attributions (Alden, 1986). The present findings support the notion that general expectations as operationalized by social approach and avoidance motives play an important role for individual differences in attributions of social events (Schoch et al., 2015).

There were several unexpected findings in the present studies. First, there was indirect association, but no direct association between social motives and the decision to participate in the speed-dating event in Study 2. There is some evidence that the power of the test of indirect effects is often considerably greater than the power of the test of the direct effect, even when they are both of the same magnitude (Kenny & Judd, 2013). This might explain why the indirect, but not the direct effect was statistically significant. In addition, Study 1 that found the predicted direct effect of motives on the decision to participate assessed the decision directly after assessing the motives; this was not the case in Study 2, which manipulated participants' perceived acceptance and rejection before assessing the decision and, thus, might interrupt the direct effects of social motives on speed-dating participation.

Second, negative expectations did not predict the decision to participate in a speed-dating event. In other words, participants decided for or against participation in a speed-dating event irrespective of how strongly they expected being rejected in the speed-dating event. This is surprising given the role of negative expectations for behavior (Leder et al., 2013). The lack of an association between negative expectations and the decision to participate in a speed-dating event might also be explained by the specific

context of the speed-dating event. Rejection in the speed-dating event is not public. When there is no match between interests, only the person that was interested in the other person would know that the other person did not choose him or her. Although this disinterest might still hurt, the rejected person saves his or her face (Beck & Clark, 2009). In addition, rejection in the speed-dating is not face-to-face but takes place indirectly by not electing somebody for a date. This likely makes the rejected person feel less awkward and stressed (compared to face-to-face rejection). Moreover, rejection in the speed-dating is typically from an unfamiliar person, which might not be perceived as a loss (e.g., “I do not know her anyway, so I will lose nothing if she rejects me”). Another possible explanation is that expecting acceptance is generally more powerful for the decision to enter a social situation than expecting rejection (Anthony et al., 2007; Cameron et al., 2010; Gable, 2006; Nikitin et al., 2012). In other words, not expecting rejection is not a strong incentive to enter a social situation. Instead, one has to expect rewards in the situation to enter it.

Limitations

The current studies have several methodological limitations. First, in Study 2 the sex ratio was skewed: there were more female than male participants. However, our analyses (see Footnote 3) showed that sex did not impact the central variables (i.e., approach social motives, avoidance social motives, attributions, positive and negative expectations, and speed-dating participation) or the relationships among these variables.

Second, the decision for/against speed-dating participation was measured as a binary nominal variable, which limited the use of sophisticated statistical models, such as the structural equation model. Future study could consider measure this variable on a

ordinal or continuous scale. One possibility is to ask participants to rate the strength of their willingness to partake a speed-dating on a multipoint response scale.

Third, we manipulated the outcome of a hypothetical speed-dating situation to investigate the effects of acceptance and rejection on subsequent actual speed-dating participation. This manipulation was found to be effective in previous research (Schoch et al., 2015), and it also significantly moderated the motivational and cognitive processes underlying initiation of speed dating in the current study. However, the effects of an imagined scenario may be less strong than the effects of an actual event, which might result in the absence of difference in the decision for a speed-dating participation between the acceptance and rejection conditions in the current study. Future studies could consider use stronger manipulations of social acceptance and rejection.

Another limitation is that it is unclear whether the present findings can be generalized to other situations of relationship initiation than speed dating. Eastwick and Finkel (2008) demonstrated that speed-dating procedures incorporate all features of an optimal paradigm to test relationship initiation such as study of real relationships with a potential future, the possibility to implement experimental manipulations, the possibility to give participants multiple romantic options or to get background characteristics before participants meet. Despite these strengths, speed-dating events are different from other relationship initiations. For example, as discussed above, the imagined rejection in a speed-dating event differs from many other social situations as nobody but the involved person him- or herself knows the outcome. A replication of the present findings in different contexts of relationship initiation seems important in order to test their generalizability.

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22

Footnotes

¹Note that it is not the avoidance of social relationships per se that is associated with social avoidance motivation. Similarly, it is not the approach of social relationships per se that is associated with social approach motivation. Both motivations can potentially lead to approach or avoidance social behavior (for example, social approach motivation—operationalized as high self-esteem—leads to approach behavior in situations high on social risk, whereas social avoidance motivation—operationalized as low self-esteem—leads to approach behavior in situations low on social risk; Stinson, Cameron, & Robinson, 2014). The difference between the motivations is the focus on the presence or absence of positive social outcomes versus the presence or absence of negative social outcomes, respectively (e.g., Gable & Berkman, 2008).

^{2,4}Results of analyses with and without the exclusion of these participants did not differ.

³As more females than males participated in the study, we explored whether males and females differed in the study variables. There was no significant sex difference in the variables of interest, including approach and avoidance motives, the three dimensions of attributions (internality, stability, and globality), positive and negative expectations (p s > .07), and frequency of participation ($\chi^2 = 3.58, p = .06$). We further examined whether sex moderated the relationships among the variable of interest. Since the sample of male participants was too small for structural equation modeling, we examined the moderation effects of sex with several simple regression analyses. The results showed that sex did not significantly moderate the effects of approach and avoidance social motives on attributions as whole (p s > .11), the effects of approach motives, avoidance motives, and

1 attributions on positive expectations ($ps > .11$), or the effects of expectations on speed-
2 dating participation ($ps > .65$). The only exception was that sex significantly moderated
3 the effect of approach motives on negative expectations ($\beta = .32, t = 2.17, p = .03$, size of
4 the moderation effect Cohen's $f^2 = .03$, which is small according to Cohen's rules of
5 thumb), that is, approach motives more negatively predicted negative expectations in
6 male than in female participants. Taken together, the results indicate that sex did not
7 impact the variables of interest or the relationships among these variables. We thus
8 pooled the data of different sexes together for the analyses.

Descriptive Statistics of Main Variables in Study 2 with Mean Differences between the Acceptance and the Rejection Condition

[illegible]

Table 2

Bivariate Correlations among the Constructs of Study 2

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	#9.
1. Approach Motives		-.19	.31	.32	.17	.31	.44	-.36	-.08 (0.76)
2. Avoidance Motives	-.13		-.07	-.01	.20	.05	-.34	.38	.03 (1.09)
3. Internality Attributions	-.21	.33		.71	.62	.90	.50	-.49	.14 (1.25)
4. Stability Attributions	-.27	.37	.54		.55	.86	.47	-.48	.12 (1.24)
5. Globality Attributions	.02	.33	.55	.54		.84	.25	-.14	.12 (1.21)
6. Total Attributions	-.18	.41	.83	.82	.85		.47	-.42	.14 (1.33)
7. Positive Expectations	.39	-.24	-.43	-.38	-.26	-.42		-.73	.11 (1.30)
8. Negative Expectations	-.21	.30	.48	.45	.52	.58	-.76		-.04 (0.93)
#9. Participation	.10	-.16	-.07	-.16	.02	-.08	.23	-.05	
	(1.40)	(0.59)	(0.90)	(0.78)	(1.03)	(0.87)	(1.59)	(0.93)	

Note. Correlations for the acceptance condition are in the right upper part of the table, correlations for the rejection condition are in the left lower part of the table. Significant correlations ($p < .05$) are presented in bold. # Since participation is a nominal measure, point-biserial correlation coefficients (which gauge the associations between nominal measures and continuous measures) and odd ratios (displayed in the brackets; obtained by regressing participation on each of the other variables) are displayed in the row or column. All other values in the table are Person's correlational coefficients.

Table 3

Standardized Estimates of the Loadings of the Manifest Variables on the Latent Variables in Study 2

	Acceptance Scenario			Rejection Scenario		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE_B</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE_B</i>	<i>Z</i>
Approach Motives						
Approach 1	.79			1		
Approach 2	.62	.19	4.15***	.51	.17	2.85**
Approach 3	.69	.25	3.56***	.44	.21	1.97*
Avoidance Motives						
Avoidance 1	.48			.66		
Avoidance 2	.59	.36	3.34***	.52	.32	2.56*
Avoidance 3	1	.75	3.09***	.94	.33	3.74***
Attributions						
Internality	.94			.78		
Stability	.86	.13	6.62***	.74	.18	5.53***
Globality	.52	.11	4.53***	.68	.16	5.40***
Positive Expectations						
Being accepted	.60			.71		
Being liked	.75	.24	5.99***	.88	.13	8.82***
Being well received	.90	.23	7.12***	.96	.16	7.50***
Establish new contacts	.52	.24	3.98***	.49	.14	4.38***
Negative Expectations						
Being not interested	.69			.76		
Others reject me	.88	.25	6.23***	.88	.12	8.88***
Nobody chooses me	.82	.25	5.34***	.76	.17	5.72***
Being rejected	.79	.22	6.52***	.85	.12	8.69***

Note. The first manifest variable in each latent variable was fixed to 1. Approach 1-3 and Avoidance 1-3 were built using the item parceling method. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Figure 1. The relationships among variables to be examined in Study 1 and 2.

Figure 2. Structural equation model with standardized estimated values of the relationship between social motives, the composite attribution score (internal vs. external, stable vs. variable, and global vs. specific attributions), and specific expectations after the acceptance scenario (upper line) and the rejection scenario (lower line). All coefficients (except for those on the dashed paths) are standardized, and their corresponding standard errors are presented in parentheses. The dashed paths are not part of the structural equation model (because speed-dating participation is a nominal measure, which, if treated as an endogenous variable, would cause problems for model estimation) but for presentation purpose only. The coefficients and standard errors (in parentheses) on the dashed paths are estimated by logistic regression, and they are not significantly moderated by condition (i.e., acceptance vs. rejection scenario). * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.