



Be yourself: Authenticity as a long-term mating strategy

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ABSTRACT

We hypothesize that “being yourself” is the dating strategy of individuals that have successful long-term relationships. Study 1 examined the relationships between authenticity and personality variables that predict relationship outcome. Study 2 employed a two-part acts nomination design to enumerate “being yourself” while dating and to examine personality correlates of “being yourself”. Study 3 explored whether individuals being themselves are attractive and if being yourself results in assortative mating with authentic individuals. Study 4 determined the effect of “be yourself” mindset priming on “be yourself” dating behavior. Study 1 found that authenticity is associated with emotional intelligence and positive relational outcomes. Study 2 found that “being yourself” dating behavior is associated with authenticity, secure attachment, and low narcissism. Study 3 found that “be yourself” dating behavior is attractive and facilitates assortative mating with authentic individuals. Study 4 found that rejection sensitive individuals are more likely to engage in “be yourself” dating behavior when made to feel safe to be themselves. “Be yourself” is the dating strategy that authentic individuals use to facilitate successful long-term relationships.

1. Introduction

Evolutionary psychologists have suggested that humans are strategic pluralists that pursue both long-term and short-term mating strategies (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). Research on individual differences suggest that certain personality styles appear to facilitate particular mating strategies. For example, Jonason, Li, Webster, and Schmitt (2009) proposed that the Dark Triad of narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy might facilitate a short-term mating strategy in men. Some evidence suggests that insecure attachment might activate a fast life-history strategy oriented towards short-term mating while secure attachment may activate a slow life history strategy oriented towards long-term mating (Belsky, 2000). The long-term mating strategies of securely attached individuals that are low on the Dark Triad traits have yet to be fully investigated. What is their approach to dating, does that approach work, if it works with whom does it work, and what social contexts facilitate or inhibit that approach?

A long-term mating strategy can be considered a set of behaviors that facilitate attracting, selecting, and retaining long-term mates (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). Personality variables associated with stable and satisfying long-term relationships include attachment security (Brennan & Shaver, 1995; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016; Simpson, 1990), empathy

(Cramer & Jowett, 2010; Kimmes, Edwards, Wetchler, & Bercik, 2014; Ulloa, Hammett, Meda, & Rubalcaba, 2017), emotional intelligence (Malouff, Schutte, & Thorsteinsson, 2014; Smith, Heaven, & Ciarrochi, 2008), and authenticity (Lenton, Bruder, Slabu, & Sedikides, 2012; Lopez & Rice, 2006). Yet the set of actual dating behaviors associated with these relationship-facilitating personality variables have yet to be fully examined.

The guiding assumption that inspired our current series of studies is that if game-playing (Campbell, Foster, & Finkel, 2002) and deception (Brewer & Abell, 2015) can constitute adaptive short-term dating strategies then long-term dating strategies might be characterized by the opposite – honesty and transparency (i.e. authenticity). The goal of a long-term dating strategy is to find a suitable romantic partner for pairbonding for biparental care – a cooperative endeavor (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). “Being yourself” while dating may advertise one’s suitability as a long-term partner. Such advertisements can also contribute to short-term dating success but may be especially essential to initiating successful long-term relationships.

According to humanistic psychologists, being authentic involves expressing one’s true self rather than hiding it behind a false persona (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). Moreover, authenticity in the relational context has been operationalized as consisting of two criteria: (1) a

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willingness to take risks in intimate relationships that make oneself emotionally vulnerable, and (2) an unwillingness to act deceitfully in such relationships even where costs may exist to honesty (Lopez & Rice, 2006).

Our four basic hypotheses are that individuals that score high on authenticity in relationships, an individual difference variable associated with secure attachment (Lopez & Rice, 2006), will have better relational outcomes than individuals that play hard-to-get (Study 1), are more likely to engage in dating behaviors that participants consider “being themselves” (Study 2), that “be yourself” dating behavior is attractive and facilitates assortative mating (Study 3), and that social contexts that make it safe to be oneself will facilitate “be yourself” dating behavior and not playing hard to get (Study 4).

The underlying logic of testing these four hypotheses was to establish that authenticity in relationships is associated with different relational outcomes and personality traits than playing hard to get and then to discover the actual dating behaviors associated with relational authenticity that participants consider “being themselves.” Finally, our goal was to begin to discover some of the processes through which “being yourself” leads to successful outcomes. For “being yourself” to be an adaptive long-term strategy it must be attractive to individuals that would be suitable long-term partners and as a facultative adaptation should be activated by social situations that reward rather than punish “being yourself.”

Support for some or all of these four hypotheses would suggest an overall dating strategy, an orientation to initiating intimate relationships that promotes successful long-term relationship outcomes. An authentic approach to relationships need not necessarily be conscious or strategic in a Machiavellian way but could simply occur where one is just “being oneself.” The implicit guiding assumption may be that approaching relationships without guile but with transparency and honesty is more likely to result in trustworthy and mutually respectful relationships that will withstand the test of time.

2. Authenticity as a relational orientation

Humanistic psychologists propose that authenticity occurs where an individual's inner experiences (i.e., values, thoughts, and emotions) reflect her or his outer behavior, resulting in an experience of being aligned with one's true, genuine self (Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Lopez & Rice, 2006). The experience of that alignment – the experience of state authenticity – is a pleasurable and desirable state of mind. State authenticity is thought to result from the combined satisfaction of autonomy and freedom from societal constraints, as well as the ability to feel wholeheartedly connected to others (Lenton et al., 2012). Authenticity is a relational orientation involving openness and honesty in one's close relationships (Kernis & Goldman, 2006) and entails acting in accordance with one's values, rather than solely to please others. In contrast to authenticity is the experience of discord between one's inner world and outer behavior. Individuals experiencing such discord may perceive themselves as fake, which puts them at risk for social adjustment problems, such as anxiety and depression (English & John, 2013).

Other research shows that authenticity is negatively associated with several traits and behaviors that are detrimental to interpersonal relationships, including insecure attachment, self-concealment, and splitting (Lopez & Rice, 2006). Research has similarly demonstrated that inauthenticity mediates the relationship between the habitual use of emotional suppression (i.e., inhibiting the expression of emotions) and hindered social functioning (e.g., decreased relationship satisfaction and social support) (English & John, 2013). Moreover, inauthentic individuals have been found to engage in self-serving and punitive behaviors towards others (Pinto, Maltby, Wood, & Day, 2012). Students working in the senior author's research workgroup collected the data for the following four studies across various projects between 2014 and 2016.

Table 1
Abbreviated terms.

Term	Abbreviation
Authenticity in Relationships Scale	AIRS
Intimate Risk Taking	IRT
Unacceptability of Deception	UOD
Brief Pathological Narcissism Inventory	B-PNI
Dating Authenticity Scale	DAS
Dirty Dozen	DD
Experiences in Close Relationships Scale	ECR-S
Pathological Narcissism Inventory	PNI
Playing hard to get	PHTG
Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire	RSQ
Relationship Questionnaire	RQ
Revised Sociosexual Orientation Inventory	SOI-R
Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale	WLEIS

3. Study 1: is authenticity associated with emotional intelligence & positive relational outcomes?

Study 1 hypothesized that authenticity will be associated with emotional intelligence and positive romantic relational outcomes. As authenticity has already been associated with secure attachment (Lopez & Rice, 2006), it was important to see if authenticity might also be associated with emotional intelligence – another variable correlated with successful long-term relationships (Malouff et al., 2014). This study also examined whether authenticity is associated with romantic relational outcomes that differ from a mating strategy characterized by “playing hard to get” (PHTG). (See Table 1 for a listing of all abbreviations used in this study) As it is employed here, PHTG is defined as a mating strategy in which individuals feign disinterest to increase others' perception of their mate value (Jonason & Li, 2013). PHTG has been associated with Machiavellianism and narcissism (Jonason & Li, 2013). Both traits have been widely linked to negative romantic relational outcomes including lying, lower commitment, and infidelity (e.g., Brewer & Abell, 2015; Campbell et al., 2002; Campbell & Foster, 2002; Ináncsi, Láng, & Bereczkei, 2015). By contrast, prior research demonstrates an association between emotional intelligence and positive relational outcomes, such as romantic relationship satisfaction (Malouff et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2008). Accordingly, we first hypothesized that authenticity would similarly be associated with emotional intelligence. We also hypothesized that authenticity is more related to superior long-term relational outcomes than PHTG, and should, therefore, be positively associated with markers of romantic stability and negatively associated with markers of romantic instability.

3.1. Method

3.1.1. Sample

From the 176 undergraduates who began this study, a total of 168 completed it, 25% ($n = 42$) of whom were male and 75% ($n = 126$) were female and whose ages ranged from 18 to 53 years (but 92.9% of completing participants were between 18 and 20 years old). In all studies, participants were removed from data analysis if they lacked complete data. Additionally, no demographic differences existed between completing and non-completing participants in any of our studies. Participants for this study were recruited from a private university in the northeastern United States. Power analyses for this and all other studies were performed on G*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007), and all such calculations involved a power parameter of 0.8, a two-tailed significance level of 0.05, and a moderate ($r = 0.3$) effect size. Given these parameters, the requisite sample sizes throughout this paper were 84 participants for correlational analyses, 82 participants for *t*-test analyses, and 90 participants for ANOVA analyses.

3.1.2. Measures

3.1.2.1. Authenticity in Relationships Scale (AIRS). We employed the AIRS (Lopez & Rice, 2006) to measure participant relationship authenticity. This instrument requires respondents to consider their current and most important intimate relationships and to rate the extent to which 24 separate statements describe themselves on a scale of 1 (“not at all descriptive”) to 9 (“very descriptive”). The AIRS consists of two subscales: “Unacceptability of Deception” (UOD) and “Intimate Risk Taking” (IRT). Whereas the UOD subscale measures “a willingness to engage in and accept deceptive and inaccurate self- and partner representations”, the IRT measures participant “preferences for or dispositions toward uninhibited, intimate self-disclosure and risk taking with one’s partner” (Lopez & Rice, 2006, p. 366). In the present study, the Cronbach’s alphas for the UOD and IRT subscales were 0.87 and 0.86, respectively. Moreover, the IRT and UOD subscales in this study were significantly related ($r = 0.49, p < .001$).

3.1.2.2. Dirty Dozen (DD). The 12-item DD (Jonason & Webster, 2010) was employed to measure participants’ Dark Triad personality traits (i.e., narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism). Participants were required to rate the extent to which they agreed with various statements from 1 (“not at all”) to 5 (“very much”). In the current study, the items were averaged to generate indices of narcissism ($\alpha = 0.75$), psychopathy ($\alpha = 0.73$), and Machiavellianism ($\alpha = 0.80$). We found significant correlations between these indices ($r = 0.24$ to $.55, p \leq .001$).

3.1.2.3. Revised Sociosexual Orientation Inventory (SOI-R). The SOI-R (Penke & Asendorpf, 2008) was employed to measure participant sociosexual orientation (i.e., the orientation towards casual sex). This instrument consists of 9 questions, each of which is answerable on a 9-point Likert scale. The SOI-R is comprised of three subscales: (1) sociosexual behavior (represented by questions such as “With how many different partners have you had sex within the past 12 months?”); (2) sociosexual attitude (represented by statements such as “Sex without love is OK”); and (3) sociosexual desire (represented by questions such as “In everyday life, how often do you have spontaneous fantasies about having sex with someone you have just met?”). The aggregate of these three subscales forms an overall measure of sociosexuality. Cronbach’s alpha for the SOI-R in the current study was 0.86.

3.1.2.4. Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS). The 16-item WLEIS (Wong & Law, 2002) was used to measure participant trait emotional intelligence. This instrument requires participants to rate various items that pertain to emotional intelligence from 1 (“strongly agree”) to 5 (“strongly disagree”). The Cronbach’s alpha for the WLEIS in the current study was 0.89.

3.1.2.5. Playing Hard-to-Get (PHTG). We developed a measure of PHTG behaviors that was based on Jonason and Li’s (2013) five indicators of PHTG: (1) Sound busy; (2) be hard to get ahold of; (3) have limited availability; (4) show initial interest, followed by decreased interest; and (5) seek attention, then disregard it. Jonason and Li (2013) found the Cronbach’s alpha of these five items to be 0.75. In our study, participants were instructed to separately identify how frequently they engaged in each of these five behaviors (1 = “not at all” to 5 = “very much”) in both short- and long-term relationships. We asked participants to respond according to relationship length given Jonason and Li’s (2013) criticism in their study that they did not consider relationship duration in their analysis of PHTG behaviors. We operationally defined short-term relationships for participants as “casual relationship[s] (e.g., booty call, one night stand, hooking up)” and long-term relationships as “serious relationship[s] (e.g., romantic or marital relationships).”

The Cronbach’s alpha for the short-term and long-term PHTG

subscales was 0.81 and 0.76, respectively. These subscales were correlated ($r = 0.45, p < .001$).

3.1.3. Procedures

We used SurveyMonkey, a web-based survey platform (www.surveymonkey.com), to collect data for all studies discussed in this paper. An emailed listserv solicitation to prospective undergraduate psychology student participants provided them with a link to the study. After providing informed consent to participate (as was required as the first step for all four of our studies), participants completed the noted study response questionnaires. Thereafter, they completed a demographics questionnaire. The university’s IRB approved the recruitment methods and procedures that we employed in each of our four studies.

3.2. Results

As hypothesized, we found that authenticity was significantly and positively associated with emotional intelligence ($r = 0.25$, all correlations $p < .01$ unless otherwise noted).¹ We also found significant associations between authenticity and various markers of the quality of one’s romantic relationships. These markers include commitment to romantic partners ($r = 0.43$), satisfaction in romantic relationships ($r = 0.53$), diminished sociosexual orientation ($r = -0.44$), and less positive attitudes towards casual sex ($r = -0.26$). Additionally, authenticity was inversely related to Long-term PHTG ($r = -0.40$), narcissism ($r = -0.23$), Machiavellianism ($r = -0.30$), and psychopathy ($r = -0.27$).

Our findings identified long-term PHTG as more associated with romantic relationship instability than short-term PHTG. Long-term PHTG was significantly related to narcissism ($r = 0.31$), Machiavellianism ($r = 0.38$), psychopathy ($r = 0.34$), sociosexual orientation ($r = 0.31$), more desire for casual sex ($r = 0.31$), more permissive attitudes towards casual sex ($r = 0.19, p < .05$), shorter romantic relationship durations ($r = -0.16, p < .05$), lower commitment to one’s current romantic partner ($r = -0.23$), lower relationship satisfaction ($r = -0.25$), increased mate poaching attempts (i.e., efforts to win someone as a romantic partner who is already in a romantic relationship) ($r = 0.21$), and increased sexual infidelity perpetration ($r = 0.16, p < .05$).

IRT was found to positively associate with participants’ current relationship satisfaction ($r = 0.56$), commitment to current romantic partner ($r = 0.45$), and the highest commitment that participants had ever had to any romantic partner ($r = 0.21$). UOD was found to be associated with current relationship satisfaction ($r = 0.39$) and commitment to current romantic partner ($r = 0.30$). PHTG Long-Term was found to inversely correlate with romantic relationship duration ($r = -0.16, p < .05$), current relationship satisfaction ($r = -0.25$), and commitment to current romantic partner ($r = -0.23$). Finally, emotional intelligence was not found to significantly correlate with current relationship satisfaction, commitment to current romantic partner, highest commitment to any romantic partner, or longest romantic relationship duration (all $p > .05, ns$).

3.3. Discussion

Prior research demonstrates that secure attachment (Brennan & Shaver, 1995; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016; Simpson, 1990), empathy (Cramer & Jowett, 2010; Kimmes et al., 2014; Ulloa et al., 2017), and

¹ To control for the possibility of Type I error, the Bonferroni correction results in modified significance threshold values of 0.002, 0.001, 0.002, and 0.002 for studies 1–4, respectively. These corrections remain identical when the Sidak correction is employed to control for correlations among the dependent variables. However, various authorities suggest that these modifications may be too conservative (e.g., Bland & Altman, 1995; Park & Jun, 2015).

emotional intelligence (Malouff et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2008) each predict positive outcomes in romantic relationships. The present research shows that authenticity should be similarly recognized as associated with positive romantic relationship outcomes. Specifically, the findings of Study 1 indicate that authenticity is associated with relationship-facilitating personality traits such as emotional intelligence and with indices of relationship quality such as relationship satisfaction and commitment. In fact, our findings suggest that authenticity is more strongly associated with current relationship satisfaction and commitment to one's current romantic partner than emotional intelligence and that the IRT dimension of authenticity is more strongly related to highest commitment to any romantic partner than emotional intelligence.

Our findings also suggest that authentic individuals engage in less long-term PHTG behavior, possess lower levels of all Dark Triad traits, and have lower sociosexual orientations. Accordingly, authenticity appears to relate to a more stable, monogamous, and long-term mating strategy than long-term PHTG. Finally, our results indicate that individuals with low-levels of long-term PHTG have better relational outcomes than those with high levels, but that authenticity is more strongly associated with positive relational outcomes than this variable.

4. Study 2: how do authentic individuals act when “Being Themselves”?

Study 2 employed a two-part paradigm to examine how individuals act when being themselves in different relationship scenarios. In Study 2a, participants were provided with a questionnaire in which they were asked to report how they act when “being yourself” in three separate scenarios: when (1) in a serious relationship, (2) dating someone with whom they desire a more serious relationship, and (3) dating to seek casual sex. We thereafter compiled the most common responses for each relationship scenario into categories for use in Study 2b with a new group of participants. Response categories for each of the scenarios were compiled based upon group consensus following a detailed review of the underlying participant responses.

In Study 2b, new participants responded to measures of narcissism, attachment style, and authenticity and provided Likert scale ratings for how often they engaged in the behaviors from Study 2a when in each of the three relationship scenarios. We hypothesized that (1) elevated IRT and UOD scores would be associated with greater engagement in the specified dating behaviors for each of the three scenario categories from Study 2a (i.e., that authentic individuals with elevated IRT and UOD scores would also display “being yourself” dating behavior when in serious relationships, dating someone with whom they desire a more serious relationship, and dating to seek casual sex), and (2) “being yourself”, in turn, would be associated with secure attachment as well as low grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. This study sought to establish that authentic individuals engage in “being yourself” dating behavior and that in addition “being yourself” would be associated with other personality traits such as secure attachment and low narcissism that have been shown to be associated with more successful long-term relationships.

4.1. Method

4.1.1. Participants and sample

Participants in Study 2a and 2b were psychology students who were recruited through listserv email solicitation from a private university in the northeastern United States. Of the 388 individuals who began Study 2a, a total of 219 completed it. Of the completing sample, 27% ($n = 60$) were male, 71.6% ($n = 159$) were female, and 1.4% ($n = 3$) identified as neither male nor female. Of the 223 individuals who began study 2b, a total of 154 completed it, 74.8% of whom were between 18 and 24 years old. Of this sample, 23.38% ($n = 36$) were male, 70.31% ($n = 108$) were female, and 6.49% ($n = 10$) declined to self-identify.

Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 65 years ($M = 28.86$, $SD = 9.49$).

4.1.2. Measures

The following instruments were employed in Study 2b.

4.1.2.1. Brief Pathological Narcissism Inventory (B-PNI). The B-PNI (Schoenleber, Roche, Wetzels, Pincus, & Roberts, 2015) was used to assess pathological narcissism. On this measure, participants are asked to rate how well 28 items describe themselves, each of which is answerable on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“not at all like me”) to 6 (“very much like me”). The B-PNI contains grandiose and vulnerable narcissism subscales. Cronbach's alphas for these subscales were 0.84 (grandiose) and 0.91 (vulnerable). These subscales were correlated ($r = 0.68$, $p < .001$). This measure of narcissism was utilized as it does not appear to be associated with self-esteem. The guiding assumption is that authenticity and being oneself will be associated with personality variables associated with emotional security and confidence.

4.1.2.2. Experiences in Close Relationships Scale – Short Form (ECR-S). The ECR-S (Wei, Russell, Mallinckrodt, & Vogel, 2007) is a measure of attachment security that contains attachment anxiety and avoidance subscales. This instrument requires participants to rate their agreement with 12 statements concerning their general perceptions and behaviors in romantic relationships. All items are answerable on 7-point Likert scales, ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). Cronbach's alphas for the anxiety and avoidance subscales in our study were 0.78, and 0.82, respectively. These subscales were correlated ($r = 0.23$, $p < .001$).

4.1.2.3. Authenticity in Relationships Scale (AIRS). The AIRS (Lopez & Rice, 2006) was used to measure participant relationship authenticity. In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha was 0.85 for both the UOD and IRT subscales. UOD and IRT were found to be correlated ($r = 0.59$, $p < .001$).

4.1.2.4. Dating Authenticity Scale (DAS). The DAS is a measure of “being yourself” that was derived from participant responses in Study 2a. The DAS contains three categories, each corresponding to “being yourself” in one of the dating scenarios in Study 2a: (1) Serious Relationships (consisting of 11 items), (2) Serious Dating Intentions (consisting of 12 items), and (3) Casual Sex Intentions (consisting of 7 items). Items on the DAS are answerable on 6-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (“not at all like me”) to 6 (“very much like me”). There was reliability for Serious Relationships ($\alpha = 0.75$) and Casual Sex Intentions ($\alpha = 0.71$), and adequate internal consistency for Serious Dating Intentions ($\alpha = 0.68$). See Table 2 for the items on each scale. Participants' responses on these categories were correlated ($r = 0.24$ to 0.67 , $p \leq .004$).

4.1.3. Procedures

In Study 2a, participants first completed a demographics questionnaire. Next, they were requested to respond to three open-ended prompts that were as follows: (1) “What are some things you do if you're ‘being yourself’ (i.e., genuine) with someone with whom you are already in a serious relationship?” (2) “What are some things you do if you're ‘being yourself’ (i.e. genuine) with someone with whom you want to date seriously?” (3) “What are some things you do if you're ‘being yourself’ (i.e., genuine) with someone with whom you want casual sex?” Participants could provide as many or as few responses as they desired. The most common participant responses for each of these questions were used to create the categories employed in Study 2b (i.e., the Serious Relationships, Serious Dating Intentions, and Casual Sex Intentions categories). In Study 2b, participants completed a demographics questionnaire (that contained, among other items, a question about the longest romantic relationship that they had been in) and the

Table 2
Common participant responses to open-ended relationship behavior questions.

<p>Serious relationships</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have sex with your significant other. 2. Dress casually around the person. 3. Not wear makeup.* 4. Be honest. 5. Spend time with the person. 6. Go on dates. 7. Be silly/playful. 8. Talk about the future. 9. Talk about marriage. 10. Go on vacation with the person. 11. Introduce your significant other to your family. <p>Serious dating intentions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Smile with the person. 2. Laugh at the person's jokes. 3. Make the person laugh. 4. Dress casually around the person. 5. Wear no makeup.* 6. Dress up when you're with the person. 7. Be honest. 8. Call the person on the phone. 9. Text the person. 10. Go on dates. 11. Hang out with the person. 12. Flirt with the person. <p>Casual sex intentions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Appear sexy. 2. Flirt with the person. 3. Show physical affection. 4. Wear makeup.* 5. Do not get emotionally attached to the person. 6. Hang out with the person. 7. Make them laugh.
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* Answers provided by female participants only.

measurement instruments listed above.

4.2. Results

Common participant responses to the open-ended questions of Study 2a, each corresponding to its particular category, are compiled in Table 2. Certain authors of this paper employed thematic analysis to complete this categorization task and relied upon group consensus for required decisions. As noted therein, participants endorsed “being yourself” behaviors that included being honest and discussing the future and marriage with serious long-term romantic partners, flirting and smiling when around serious dating interests, and appearing sexy and remaining emotionally unattached when around casual sexual interests.

For Study 2b the correlations between each of the three DAS categories and insecure attachment, narcissism, and authenticity are provided in Table 3. As noted in that table, our Study 2b data indicate that authenticity in serious relationships was negatively correlated with avoidant attachment and vulnerable narcissism but was positively

Table 3
Pearson correlations between DAS categories and personality measures.

	Serious relationships	Serious dating intentions	Casual sex intentions
Anxious Attachment	-0.11	-0.03	-0.08
Avoidant Attachment	-0.55**	-0.45**	-0.09
Grandiose Narcissism	0.03	0.15	0.25**
Vulnerable Narcissism	-0.17*	-0.11	0.03
Intimate Risk Taking	0.52**	0.51**	0.17*
Unacceptability of Deception	0.45**	0.41**	0.13

** $p < .01$.

* $p < .05$.

correlated with UOD and IRT. Moreover, Table 3 also displays our finding that authenticity in the context of desiring to seriously date a romantic partner negatively correlates with avoidant attachment and positively correlates with IRT and UOD. Furthermore, as noted in Table 3, we found that authenticity in the context of desiring casual sex from a romantic partner was significantly correlated with both grandiose narcissism and IRT.

Correlations between longest relationship length, anxious and avoidant attachment, narcissism, and our DAS categories are listed in Table 4. The data suggested that the lengths of participants' longest romantic relationships were negatively correlated with avoidant attachment and were positively correlated with engagement in the authentic behaviors included in the Serious Relationships subscale of our DAS measure.

4.3. Discussion

Our Study 2a data indicate specific forms of “being yourself” in three separate relationship contexts. Additionally, our Study 2b data indicate a negative correlation between “being yourself” in serious relationships (per the behaviors listed on Table 2) and levels of attachment avoidance and vulnerable narcissism. Relatedly, a negative correlation was discovered between “being yourself” and attachment avoidance where individuals desire to date partners more seriously. Given the ample research that ties attachment avoidance (Allen & Baucom, 2004; Butzer & Campbell, 2008; Campbell, Simpson, Kashy, & Rholes, 2001; DeWall et al., 2011) and vulnerable narcissism (Campbell et al., 2002; Campbell & Foster, 2002) to negative romantic relationship behaviors and outcomes, “being yourself” in certain interpersonal contexts may be associated with relationship stability and longevity. Indeed, participant engagement in the Serious Relationships subscale behaviors of the DAS positively correlated with relationship longevity and was shown to inversely relate to avoidant attachment.

Moreover, our findings indicate that individuals who believe deception is unacceptable and take risks for intimacy tend to act in specific ways when being themselves in various relationship contexts (i.e., engage in specific behaviors, like being honest and talking about marriage, that suggest transparency, availability, and interest). Specifically, we found that IRT and UOD were associated with “being yourself” where individuals were both interested in seeking or involved with a long-term romance and that IRT was associated with “being yourself” where they desire casual sex. However, our finding that grandiose narcissism is associated with “being yourself” where casual sex is desired suggests that for some people “being yourself” may facilitate casual as well as serious sexual relationships. This finding may also suggest that individuals with insecure attachment and elevated levels of personality pathology might diminish their long-term prospects when being themselves. Such individuals make it transparent that they want sex without commitment rather than pretend to be more available for a relationship than they actually are.

5. Study 3: is “Being Yourself” sexy, and to whom?

It has been suggested that PHTG might make individuals more attractive according to the law of supply and demand; signaling that one is in demand might imply that he or she is a scarce commodity and therefore more desirable (Jonason & Li, 2013). By contrast, signaling one's availability could implicitly suggest that he or she is not in demand and is, therefore, of low mate value. Accordingly, for “being yourself” dating behavior to succeed as a dating strategy, its presentation must be attractive to at least the partners that individuals being themselves desire to obtain – presumably authentic, securely attached, and low narcissistic individuals like themselves. The current study examines whether “being yourself” dating behavior is an attractive trait and, if so, to whom it is attractive. It was hypothesized that “being yourself” should be more attractive to individuals high in authenticity

Table 4
Pearson correlations between longest relationship length, insecure attachment, narcissism, and DAS subscales.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Longest Relationship Duration	1									
Anxious Attachment	−0.06	1								
Avoidant Attachment	−0.17*	0.23**	1							
Grandiose Narcissism	−0.13	0.39**	0.16	1						
Vulnerable Narcissism	−0.13	0.61**	0.41**	0.68**	1					
Intimate Risk Taking	0.13	−0.16	−0.63**	−0.01	−0.26**	1				
Unacceptability of Deception	0.03	−0.39**	−0.59**	−0.31**	−0.58**	0.59**	1			
DAS –Serious Relationships	0.18*	−0.11	−0.55**	0.03	−0.17*	0.52**	0.45**	1		
DAS –Serious Dating Intentions	−0.04	−0.03	−0.45**	0.15	−0.11	0.51**	0.41**	0.66**	1	
DAS –Casual Sex Intentions	−0.15	−0.08	−0.09	0.25**	0.03	0.17*	0.13	0.24**	0.46**	1

** $p < .01$.

* $p < .05$.

(i.e. birds of a feather flock together) than individuals high on Dark Triad traits that are more inclined to play hard to get.

5.1. Method

5.1.1. Participants and sample

Of the 294 individuals who began Study 3, a total of 235 completed it. All participants were recruited through listserv email solicitation to psychology students at a private university in the northeastern United States and the general population via online solicitation from the Hanover College “Psychology Research on the Net” webpage (<http://psych.hanover.edu/Research/exponnet.html>). Of the participants that completed this study, 18.7% ($n = 44$) were male, 79.6% ($n = 187$) were female, 1.7% ($n = 4$) identified as neither male nor female, and 80.1% were between the ages of 18 and 22.

5.1.2. Measures

5.1.2.1. Authenticity in Relationships Scale (AIRS). We employed the AIRS (Lopez & Rice, 2006) to measure participant relationship authenticity. In the present study, the Cronbach's alphas for the UOD and IRT subscales were 0.86 and 0.91, respectively. These subscales were correlated ($r = 0.46$, $p < .001$).

5.1.2.2. Dirty Dozen (DD). The 12-item DD (Jonason & Webster, 2010) was employed to measure participants' Dark Triad personality traits. Cronbach's alpha for the narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism subscales were 0.86, 0.78, and 0.81, respectively. These three subscales were correlated ($r = 0.35$ to 0.53 , $p < .001$).

5.1.3. Procedures

Participants first completed the DD, then completed the AIRS, and thereafter completed a brief demographics form. Next, each participant was randomly assigned to either a “being yourself” or a “game-playing” vignette condition, both of which involved an interaction with a potential romantic partner. Participants identifying as heterosexual read vignettes involving opposite-sex romantic partners, participants identifying as homosexual read vignettes involving same-sex romantic partners, and the sex of the vignette partner was randomly assigned to participants who identified as bisexual. After reading the assigned vignette, participants answered five questions concerning the potential mate that they had read about in the condition. These questions assessed participants' attraction to the potential mate and their perceptions of him or her and were answerable on Likert scales ranging from 1 (“disagree strongly”) to 7 (“agree strongly”).

5.1.3.1. “Being Yourself” condition. As noted, the sex of the potential mate and the descriptive pronouns that were included in the vignette differed based on participant sexual orientation. A “being yourself” vignette was developed in which the target of dating interest displayed transparency, availability, and interest. The “being yourself” condition

prompt read as follows:

You're mingling at a party when you see someone attractive. You see that he is engaged in conversation with a few other people. He seems to be deep in conversation but when you approach him, he includes you in his conversation. He is thoughtful and easy to read. It's easy to get to know him because he appears open to talking about any topic and you can see that he doesn't hide his true feelings. You find it easy to talk to him about anything.

5.1.3.2. “Game-Playing” condition. The game-playing condition prompt – based on behaviors that Jonason and Li (2013) consider “playing hard to get” – read as follows:

You're mingling at a party when you see someone attractive. You see that she is talking and flirting with other people. You want to get to know her so you approach her. She seems really confident and flirtatious but she is also very busy with all the other people trying to get her attention. She flirts with you but it's hard to get to know her or keep her attention because other people want to engage with her. Although she teases and engages you in conversation, she's distracted by other people trying to get her attention.

5.1.3.3. Dependent measures. After reading the assigned condition vignette, participants responded to the following questions on Likert scale responses as described above. There was one unitary factor underlying these dependent measures ($\alpha = 0.90$) that accounted for 72.22% of the total variance among them. The dependent measures were as follows: (1) “I would be very interested in dating this person.” (2) “This person seems like a fun person to be around.” (3) “This person is attractive to me.” (4) “I could be myself around this person.” (5) “I can see myself in a serious long-term relationship with this person.”

5.2. Results

5.2.1. Main effects of vignette condition

Participants rated the individual being him or herself to be a more desirable romantic partner than the game-playing individual, and this preference held for each dependent measure individually. One-way MANOVA results indicate that there was a significant difference in attraction ratings based upon priming condition; $F(5, 211) = 2.61$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.06$. Participants perceived the “being yourself” partner ($M = 5.81$, $SD = 1.19$) to be significantly more attractive than the game-playing partner ($M = 4.37$, $SD = 1.77$); $t(231) = -7.40$, $p < .001$, $r = 0.43$. Participants were significantly more interested in dating the “being yourself” partner ($M = 5.25$, $SD = 1.62$) than the game-playing partner ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 1.71$); $t(231) = -9.49$, $p < .001$, $r = 0.53$. Participants rated the “being yourself” partner ($M = 5.98$, $SD = 0.99$) as seeming to be significantly more fun to be around than the game-playing partner ($M = 4.56$, $SD = 1.80$); t

(231) = -7.62 , $p < .001$, $r = 0.44$. Furthermore, participants reported that they could be themselves to a significantly greater extent with the “being yourself” partner ($M = 5.38$, $SD = 1.47$) than with the game-playing partner ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 1.76$); $t(231) = -9.48$, $p < .001$, $r = 0.53$. Finally, participants reported being able to see themselves in a serious, long-term relationship with the “being yourself” partner ($M = 4.85$, $SD = 1.63$) significantly more than with the game-playing partner ($M = 2.16$, $SD = 1.35$); $t(231) = -13.58$, $p < .001$, $r = 0.67$.

Given the high Cronbach's alpha among our five dependent measures ($\alpha = 0.90$), we combined them into an overall attraction score for further analysis. For this overall attraction score, ANOVA analysis revealed a large main effect of vignette condition wherein participants rated the “being yourself” individual ($M = 27.15$, $SD = 5.6$) as a significantly more desirable romantic partner than the game player ($M = 17.56$, $SD = 6.61$); $t(227) = -11.88$, $p < .001$, $r = 0.62$. This main effect held for both men ($t(42) = -4.62$, $p < .001$, $r = 0.57$) and women ($t(183) = -11.27$, $p < .001$, $r = 0.64$).

One-way MANOVA testing revealed no main effects of any personality variable (all $p > .05$, *ns.*). However, in an exploratory analysis, a total of four three-way interactions were noted, each involving participant sex, vignette condition, and a personality covariate: (1) UOD ($F(1, 229) = 11.71$, $p < .001$; $\eta_p^2 = 0.05$); (2) IRT ($F(1, 229) = 8.4$, $p = .004$; $\eta_p^2 = 0.04$); (3) narcissism ($F(1, 229) = 6.38$, $p = .01$; $\eta_p^2 = 0.03$); and (4) psychopathy ($F(1, 229) = 7.11$, $p = .01$; $\eta_p^2 = 0.03$). Subsequent correlational analysis to these three-way interactions indicated that authentic men dislike game-playing females (all $p > .05$, *ns.*) and that men with elevated Dark Triad levels liked such women (all ≤ 0.05), but revealed no interaction effect for women (all $p > .05$, *ns.*). Specifically, such analyses suggested that (1) males who are more comfortable with deceiving their romantic companions are significantly more attracted to game-playing individuals than males or females who are uncomfortable with such deception, (2) males who find intimate risk taking to be important in their relationships are significantly less attracted to game-playing females than are males or females who are uncomfortable with intimate risk taking, (3) males with high narcissism levels are significantly more attracted to the game-playing partner than males or females who are low in narcissism, and (4) males with higher levels of psychopathy are more attracted to game-playing females than males or females with lower levels of psychopathy.

5.3. Discussion

Our data reveal that individuals “being themselves” are more desirable dating and long-term romantic partners than are game-players on a variety of dimensions. Accordingly, it appears that there is something alluring about “being yourself” that is attractive to potential mates regardless of one's sex or personality characteristics. One possible reason that the current data provided was that individuals felt freer to be themselves (i.e. state authenticity) around a potential dating partner being him or herself than the game-playing partner. Our findings also provide evidence for assortative mating that occurs as a function of authenticity and Dark Triad personality traits among men. Males with elevated authenticity scores (both UOD and IRT) displayed a special antipathy towards female game-playing prospective romantic partners. By contrast, males with elevated levels of narcissism and psychopathy showed an increased attraction to the female game-playing partner.

6. Study 4: does social acceptance promote “Being Yourself” in dating?

Game-playing strategies – such as PHTG – may be defensively motivated by the fear of being rejected for being oneself. Accordingly, alleviating the underlying fear of rejection for being oneself may enable insecure individuals to increase specific “being yourself” dating

strategies such as texting and going on dates in which they make their interest and emotional availability transparent. Similarly, exacerbating the fear of rejection for expressing being oneself could increase a game-playing strategy like PHTG in which one hides interest and availability by delaying a text or a date. Study 4 tests these hypotheses through a vignette experiment. In addition to assessing the personality variables previously associated with relationship outcomes such as attachment style and narcissism, it was thought important to assess if rejection sensitive individuals would be especially reactive to social cues suggesting acceptance or rejection for being themselves.

6.1. Method

6.1.1. Participants and sample

Of the 711 individuals who began Study 4, a total of 533 completed it. Participants were recruited through listserv email solicitation from a private university in the northeastern United States and a public university in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Our final sample was comprised of 344 women (64.5%), 188 men (35.3%), and 1 individual (0.2%) who did not identify as either male or female. Of these participants, 71.3% ($n = 380$) were between 18 and 20 years of age.

6.1.2. Measures

6.1.2.1. Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (RSQ). The RSQ (Downey & Feldman, 1996) is an 18-item Likert response measure of how sensitive individuals are to interpersonal rejection. Participants taking the RSQ are provided with various interpersonal scenarios that involve the potential for interpersonal rejection. For each scenario, participants are asked to rate how concerned or anxious they would be if they were rejected (1 = “very unconcerned” to 6 = “very concerned”) and are then asked to rate how likely others in the scenario would be to respond in a non-rejecting manner (1 = “very unlikely” to 6 = “very likely”). In the current study, Cronbach's alpha was 0.86.

6.1.2.2. Relationship Questionnaire (RQ). The RQ (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) is a 4-item self-report questionnaire that measures adult attachment style. Participants taking the RQ first select 1 of 4 prototypical relationship style descriptions (corresponding to secure, preoccupied, dismissing, and fearful attachment) that best describe themselves, and thereafter indicate the extent to which each of the listed descriptions correspond to how they interact with others on a scale of 1 (“disagree strongly”) to 7 (“agree strongly”). Secure attachment was found to be a significant negative correlate of fearful ($r = -0.56$, $p < .001$) and dismissing ($r = -0.17$, $p < .001$) attachment, but it did not correlate with preoccupied attachment ($r = -0.07$, $p = .1$, *ns.*). Fearful attachment did not correlate with either preoccupied ($r = 0.04$, $p = .36$, *ns.*) or dismissing ($r = 0.08$, $p = .07$, *ns.*) attachment, but dismissing attachment negatively correlated with preoccupied attachment ($r = -0.26$, $p < .001$).

6.1.2.3. Pathological Narcissism Inventory (PNI). The PNI (Pincus et al., 2009) is a 52-item self-report measure that assesses narcissistic grandiosity and vulnerability on two separate subscales. The Narcissistic Grandiosity subscale of the PNI contains 18 items, and the Narcissistic Vulnerability subscale contains 34 items. Participants taking the PNI rate the extent to which various statements describe themselves from 0 (“not at all like me”) to 5 (“very much like me”), with higher scores reflecting elevated pathological narcissism. In the present study, the Cronbach's alphas for the grandiosity and vulnerability subscales were 0.9 and 0.93, respectively. These two subscales were correlated ($r = 0.67$, $p < .001$).

6.1.2.4. Being yourself in serious dating. The authors developed the following measures of being yourself in a serious dating context consistent with the results of Study 2a (See Table 1) for use in the current study. In the first measure, participants were provided with the

following vignette:

Imagine that yesterday you went on a first date with someone who you can see dating seriously. Today, you receive a text from this person that says that he/she had a great time and wants to know when you can get together again.

Participants then responded to two questions based on this vignette. The first question read as follows: “Assuming your schedule is open, when should you say you’d like to go on a second date?” (1 = “today”, 2 = “tomorrow”, 3 = “3 days later”, 4 = “4 days later”, 5 = “5 days later”, 6 = “6 days later”, and 7 = “7 days later or more”). The second question read: “Assuming you’re not busy, when should you respond to the text?” (1 = “right away”, 2 = “10 minutes after you read it”, 3 = “30 minutes after you read it”, 4 = “2 hours after you read it”, and 5 = “more than one day after you read it”). Here, we operationalized “being yourself” in a serious dating context in terms of how long it takes to accept an invitation to a second date and respond to a text from an individual that the participant could envision seriously dating. “Being yourself” would be accepting a date and responding to a text sooner rather than later.

The third dependent measure consisted of 14 statements that assessed participants’ general PHTG tendencies in romantic relationships. This scale utilized Jonason and Li’s (2013) five indicators of PHTG. The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was 0.81. Moreover, each of our three PHTG measures displayed were correlated with each other; $r = 0.17$ to 0.31 , $p < .001$.

6.1.3. Procedures

Participants completed the RSQ, RQ, and PNI. Thereafter, they were randomly assigned to either a “be yourself” or a “false-self” mindset priming condition. The “be yourself” vignette stated: “Research shows it’s good to act naturally and feel free to be yourself in romantic relationships. The people who are the happiest in romantic relationships are those who feel free to be themselves whether people like it or not.” The “false-self” vignette stated: “Research shows it’s good to act independent and self-sufficient in romantic relationships. The people who are the happiest in romantic relationships are those who do not show how openly desperate and needy they can be.” After reading the assigned vignette, participants completed the three dependent measures and a demographics questionnaire.

6.2. Results

As displayed in Table 5, we found that the PHTG scale was significantly and positively correlated with rejection sensitivity, grandiose and vulnerable narcissism, and all three categories of attachment insecurity: fearful, preoccupied, and dismissing. Moreover, participant scores on the PHTG scale were significantly and negatively correlated with secure attachment. Furthermore, delaying a date (i.e., the opposite

Table 5
Pearson correlations of PHTG measures, rejection sensitivity, narcissism, and attachment security.

	Delayed date	Delayed text	PHTG total
Delayed Date	1	–	–
Delayed Text	0.26**	1	–
PHTG Total	0.17**	0.31**	1
Rejection Sensitivity	0.10*	–0.02	0.14**
Grandiose Narcissism	–0.03	0.04	0.41**
Vulnerable Narcissism	0.06	0.07	0.41**
Secure Attachment	–0.21**	–0.08	–0.17**
Fearful Attachment	0.16**	0.04	0.22**
Preoccupied Attachment	0.02	0.04	0.12**
Dismissing Attachment	0.03	–0.03	0.09*

** $p < .01$.

* $p < .05$.

of being yourself) was positively associated with delaying a text (i.e., the opposite of being yourself), scores on the PHTG scale, rejection sensitivity, and fearful attachment, and was negatively associated with secure attachment. These correlations jointly indicate the construct validity of our hypothesis that being yourself dating behavior is the opposite of PHTG; the delayed date item correlates with our explicit measure of PHTG and with other personality variables in the expected directions. As also displayed in that table, delaying a text was positively associated with scores on the PHTG scale and delaying a date (as noted above).

ANOVA analysis revealed a significant main effect of vignette condition on arranging a date, wherein participants given the “be yourself” prime ($M = 3.03$, $SD = 1.31$) arranged another date significantly faster than participants given the “false-self” prime ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 1.51$); $F(1, 531) = 7.88$, $p = .01$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$. Moreover, a significant two-way interaction between priming condition and rejection sensitivity was noted; $F(1, 529) = 6.95$, $p = .01$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.01$. Subsequent analysis revealed a significant correlation within the “false-self” vignette condition between rejection sensitivity and delaying a date ($r = 0.19$, $p = .002$). However, no such significant correlation was found for the “be yourself” priming condition ($r = -0.03$, $p = .64$, ns).

We also found a significant main effect of priming condition on responding to the romantic interest’s text. Participants given the “be yourself” prime ($M = 1.87$, $SD = 0.83$) endorsed texting back their hypothetical romantic interest significantly faster than participants given the “false-self” prime ($M = 2.03$, $SD = 0.88$); $F(1, 528) = 4.69$, $p = .03$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.01$. Similarly, a main effect of participant sex was found for text response time, with males ($M = 1.78$, $SD = 0.82$) stating that they would text significantly sooner than females ($M = 2.04$, $SD = 0.87$); $F(1, 528) = 6.49$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$. However, no significant main effect of priming condition was noted for participant responses on the PHTG scale; $F(1, 528) = 0.31$, $p = .58$, ns .

6.3. Discussion

Study 4 results suggest that feeling free to engage in “being yourself” dating behavior is related to making oneself more available for a first date and responding more quickly to a text from a potential romantic partner. By contrast, being made to feel unsafe to be oneself was related to participants being less available for a first date and delaying responding to a text from a potential romantic partner. Rejection-sensitive individuals become less available to a first date, and more likely to delay that date when made to feel it’s not safe to be themselves. Individuals low on rejection sensitivity are less likely to delay a date when made to feel unsafe to be themselves. Moreover, individuals high on rejection sensitivity are no more likely to delay a date than are low rejection sensitivity individuals when they are made to feel safe to be themselves.

This study reveals an intriguing person-by-situation interaction. More vulnerable individuals, such as rejection-sensitive individuals, begin to act like less vulnerable individuals in making themselves available for a date when they are made to feel safe to be themselves. However, vulnerable individuals respond defensively by delaying a date (i.e., deploying a PHTG strategy) when a fear of rejection for being themselves triggers their underlying vulnerability. As such, PHTG can be conceptualized as defensively motivated by a fear of rejection for being oneself among rejection-sensitive individuals. The induction of state authenticity through “be yourself” mindset priming allows such individuals to risk engaging in being yourself dating behavior despite their underlying insecurities.

7. General discussion

The findings of our four studies offer important insight into the role of “being yourself” in romantic relationships. There were few significant gender differences in these studies, so the results appear to

apply to men and women equally. Authenticity is positively associated with emotional intelligence and good relational outcomes, and negatively associated with PHTG mating strategies and Dark Triad traits. Authentic individuals indicate that they engage in “being yourself” dating behavior when looking for serious relationships, and when in serious relationships. Additionally, our findings suggest that individuals engaging in “being yourself” dating behavior are generally preferred as dating partners over more game-playing individuals. Moreover, authentic men possess a special antipathy towards more game-playing females, thereby facilitating assortative mating with women more inclined to be themselves. High Dark Triad men show a preference for more game-playing females.

Through our vignette manipulation we found that rejection sensitive individuals report that they would be more likely to make themselves available in a dating context when made to feel safe to be themselves. Rejection sensitive individuals act more like secure people when made to feel safe to be themselves. Taken together, the results of these four studies suggest that authentic, securely attached, and low narcissistic individuals may engage in being yourself dating behavior to facilitate the development of successful long-term relationships.

A dating strategy utilizing “being yourself” dating behavior can be understood from an evolutionary perspective in terms of costly signaling theory (Zahavi, 1977). Authenticity in relationships (i.e. honesty and intimate risk taking) requiring dating behavior that displays emotional transparency, availability, and interest can be costly when it requires exposing emotional vulnerability to those that might be rejecting. Such interpersonal costs may make “being yourself” dating behavior an honest signal of mate value as a long-term partner. “Being yourself” might reflect a “slow life history strategy” (Kaplan & Gangestad, 2005) oriented towards high parental investment facilitated by long-term pairbonding for biparental care. Future research might explore if individuals that engage in “be yourself” dating behavior later demonstrate high parental investment to establish that advertising authenticity while dating is an honest signal of future parenting behavior.

8. Limitations and conclusions

Our studies rely mainly on self-report and therefore do not assess participants' everyday behavior through direct observation; it is possible that participants' responses and their actual behavior in real-life situations may differ. Additionally, the employed vignettes might not parallel real-life behavior and we utilize vignettes as mindset primes that have yet to be validated in other ways. Moreover, the “be yourself”/ “false-self” mindset primes were not designed to activate very high levels of emotional arousal, so it is possible that the significant but small main effect size might have been larger if we had employed more emotionally arousing vignettes.

Personality variables such as agreeableness and extraversion need to be examined in future studies to assess how those variables fit into the nomothetic web of variables that predict successful long-term relationships. Can authenticity be detected in speed dating? Our studies rely primarily on young adults in college so they may not generalize to older samples. To the extent these behavioral patterns found in young adulthood do continue into later adulthood, it may be important for those individuals wishing to eventually have successful long-term relationships to learn how to take risks for intimacy and be honest and practice dating strategies associated with openness, transparency, and availability. Psychotherapy could facilitate individuals learning to be more authentic in intimate relationships.

Ethical statement

All four studies were approved by the Institutional Review Board of Adelphi University.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Lawrence Josephs: Conceptualization, Data curation, Writing - original draft. **Benjamin Warach:** Data curation, Writing - review & editing. **Kirby L. Goldin:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Writing - review & editing. **Peter K. Jonason:** Formal analysis, Writing - review & editing. **Bernard S. Gorman:** Formal analysis. **Sanya Masroor:** Conceptualization, Data curation. **Nixza Lebron:** Data curation.

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