

## The Role of Income, Gender, and Mating Preference on Climate Change Attitudes

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### ABSTRACT

Any attempts to reduce overconsumption and climate change need to take evolved human predispositions into account or they are likely to be ineffective. An experiment was conducted to assess the extent to which status and mating preferences could alter climate change attitudes. Participants were a mixed student/community sample ( $n=140$ ) who visited Survey Monkey and were asked to read a passage on consumerism. The manipulation was embedded within the passage and participants were randomly assigned to receive messages that celebrities were launching “green” (i.e. environmentally conscious) products (versus a control) or that the opposite sex was attracted to individuals who made green purchases (versus a control). Climate change attitudes were assessed with three items on the ability to remedy global warming, exaggeration of global warming (reversed), and responsibility for global warming. Results indicated that people with higher income levels (i.e. > \$75,000) and males showed greater denial of global warming. A moderation analysis demonstrated that females informed of mating preferences for green consumers showed significantly higher optimism about remedying global warming and were less likely to endorse that it was exaggerated. This ran counter to predictions based on sexual selection, where males would be expected to alter attitudes to compete for females.

### KEYWORDS

Climate change, global warming, status, mating preferences, gender, income

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Awareness of global climate change and concern has been on the rise since the first measurements of awareness began in the 1970’s (Bord, Fisher, & O’Conner 1998). More recent data from Gallup polls shows increasing concern about climate change and acknowledgment that it is due to human activity. From 2003 to 2007 acknowledgment of human activity playing a role in climate change was relatively

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steady, ranging from 58% to 61% (Saad, 2007) and this trend continued into 2014, when 57% of Americans endorsed the idea (Saad, 2014). A 2016 National Gallup poll indicated that concern for global warming was at an eight-year high. Approximately 64% of U.S. adults were worried a “great deal” or “fair amount” about global warming (Saad & Jones, 2016). Yet, it is clear from this data that, although concern is rising, a sizeable minority still deny climate change.

A number of studies have offered explanations for the denial seen in the polls. Gifford (2011) notably listed 29 “dragons of inaction,” among which were an ancient brain that is more attuned to immediate short-term concerns rather than long-term problems such as climate change. Penn (2003) has explored the evolutionary underpinnings of environmental destruction, noting that humans have a long history of exploiting nature due to hardwired tendencies, which include discounting the future, taking more than our fair share of common-pool resources (i.e. the tragedy of the commons), and sexual selection.

According to evolutionary theorists, sexual selection accounts for much of the intersexual and intrasexual competition that is seen across the bulk of mammalian species. While males might demonstrate their fitness through physical ornamentation or extravagant mating displays in other species, it is believed that humans exhibit financial resources and status to appeal to prospective mates (Buss, 1990). Indeed, such displays of material goods, and the cycle of trying to emulate others who possess such goods, may be fueling the rampant overconsumption seen in Western societies and the consequent warming of the Earth. The present study sought to determine whether attitudes towards climate change could be changed by “green” (i.e. environmentally conscious) messages related to status and mating preferences.

### Status-Striving and Climate Change

Social hierarchies serve to organize individuals in a group and are a fundamental component of both animal and human societies. While the specific construct on which a hierarchy is based can vary depending on social norms or values, individuals are arranged according to their respective status. Often, this placement is not explicitly communicated, but rather based on the perceptions and judgments of others in the group (Fiske, 2010). Individuals who possess greater resources tend to achieve higher status positions, and subsequently gain access to additional resources in a feedback loop. This is advantageous in terms of individual well-being and sexual selection, both key motivating factors in behavior.

Humans demonstrate status in qualitatively different ways than non-human species. Because status is determined by others in a group, it is often based on resources or qualities that are deemed desirable within the society (Shultz et al., 2007). In modern societies this is often monetary wealth, as this is the means by which people are able to obtain almost any other resource. Realistically, humans only need adequate financial resources to afford shelter, food and clothing for survival purposes. However, in order to communicate status to the rest of society, especially prospective mates, it would be important to demonstrate an excess or abundance of wealth (Buss, 1990). In this way, wealth and material possessions have become a “display” in helping people achieve greater status and compete in

sexual selection (Miller, 2010). Indeed, studies have shown that conspicuous displays of wealth enhance social status in addition to improving one's mating success (Nelissen & Meijers 2011; Smith & Bliege Bird, 2000).

Consider the term "status symbols;" items that lack practical purpose but overtly demonstrate wealth beyond what is necessary for survival. Status symbols are often extravagant versions of these basic needs such as large homes or fashionable clothing. Status symbols and other material possessions are usually not particularly advantageous over their less expensive versions, suggesting that status-striving is the underlying motive for purchase (Geher & Miller, 2007). Research across cultures has found that women prefer mates who demonstrate financial stability, highlighting the universality of this drive (Buss et al., 1990; Dunn & Searle, 2010). Consequently, these superfluous items become demonstrative of wealth as members of society compete for status and prestige leading to ever-increasing displays of wealth (Griskevicius et al., 2007).

However, these items are not only costly for the purchaser, but also for the environment as overconsumption has been cited as a primary cause of environmental degradation and is often correlated with climate change (Geher & Miller, 2007). Globally, the world's highest income earners account for approximately 20% of the population, yet this 20% is responsible for 76.6% of resource consumption (United Nations, 1998). Efforts to reduce the human ecological footprint include public campaigns that encourage people to reduce, reuse and recycle. These campaigns have been gaining momentum and being green is becoming a desirable social norm, communicating selflessness and concern for others' well-being. In fact, materialism and extravagant displays of wealth are sometimes associated with negative personality qualities, like selfishness and greed (Shultz et al., 2007).

Several studies have found that females prefer males who demonstrate cooperative behavior (Farrelly, 2011; Oda et al., 2013). Mate choice leads to status and status conveys a degree of inherent power, suggesting that prosocial qualities would be dually desirable (Hardy & Van Vugt, 2006). In support of this, evidence suggests that individuals who voluntarily sacrifice time or resources for the benefit of others tend to be rewarded with status positions (Price, 2003). Of course, in order to self-sacrifice, an individual would have to possess enough resources to maintain their basic needs (Saad, 2011). In other words, being green might actually be a modern "costly signal" (Zahavi, 1975). Indeed, in a clever series of experiments Griskevicius et al. (2010) found that by priming status-seeking motives, individuals were actually more likely to make green purchasing choices, especially when those choices were more expensive.

### Celebrity Influence

Celebrities by their very nature occupy high status positions within a society and their influence on purchasing intentions and attitudes have been studied by a number of researchers. Some studies have pointed to celebrity attractiveness as a key predictor (Kahle & Homer, 1985), whereas others point to celebrity expertise above other factors (Ohanian, 1991). A meta-analysis conducted by Amos et al. (2008) found that the Source Credibility Model, which incorporates trustworthiness,

expertise, and attractiveness tended to be most influential in terms of consumer purchasing intentions and attitudes. The present study was not concerned with the elements of celebrity influence per se but rather whether the purported actions of high status individuals (in the form of celebrities), would have an effect on the attitudes of participants.

### Overview of the Present Study

A mixed student/community sample was utilized in the present study in order to increase the generalizability of the findings. All participants were randomly assigned to receive either green messages or neutral (i.e. control) messages embedded in a larger passage on consumerism. One independent variable manipulated celebrity influence by discussing celebrity green product lines as compared to a second condition, which discussed only celebrity product lines. A second independent variable manipulated mating preferences by discussing attraction to individuals making green purchases, versus attention to the purchasing habits of the opposite sex (see Procedure and Appendices A and B for more details). Participants were then asked to respond to several attitude surveys, within which were embedded the dependent variables; attitudes towards global warming in the form of optimism for change, exaggeration of global warming, and responsibility for global warming. A pattern of climate change denial was thought to be reflected in pessimism about change, agreement that global warming is exaggerated, and denial of responsibility. The specific hypotheses were as follows:

- 1) Consistent with previous studies, there should be less denial of climate change by females compared to males.
- 2) Participants receiving messages pertaining to celebrity efforts to go green would show significantly less denial concerning climate change compared to the control group.
- 3) Participants receiving messages pertaining to mating preferences for green members of the opposite sex would show significantly less denial concerning climate change compared to the control group.
- 4) Gender would significantly moderate the relationship between mating preference and climate change denial. Specifically, males informed of female preferences for green members of the opposite sex would be more likely to change their attitudes towards less denial compared to females.

## METHODS

### Participants

Participants were 140 (46 males, 94 females) members of the community and undergraduate psychology students. Each psychology student had been asked to recruit 3 family members and friends to complete the survey as well. The average

age of 37.06 ( $SD=13.88$ ) suggests that the sample was not a typical student sample. All participants provided informed consent and received course credit for their participation. The sample was heavily Caucasian (94.3%), followed by participants who claimed multiple ethnicities (4.3%), Asian (.7%), and Latin American (.7%). This ethnic breakdown is indicative of the geographical area. Educational levels were as follows: High School or lower (22.9%); Associate's Degree (31.4%); Bachelor's Degree (22.1%); Master's Degree (12.1%); Doctoral Degree (.7%), and other (10% - mostly "some college"). Income levels (2 missing) reflected the mixed student/community sample: \$0 - \$15,000 (22.1%); \$15,000 - \$30,000 (17.9%); \$30,000 - \$45,000 (15%); \$45,000 - \$60,000 (15%); \$60,000 - \$75,000 (10%); \$75,000 and more (18.6%).

### Measures

Participants completed all measures on Survey Monkey and were randomly assigned to read a passage on consumerism (see Appendices A and B) with the manipulation (4 different messages) embedded within the passage (see Procedure). In order to reduce demand characteristics participants immediately completed the following 4 questions about the passage:

1. To what extent do you believe companies are intruding on people's privacy in order to target their preferences?
2. To what extent do you believe values are reflected in our purchases?
3. To what extent is the trend towards more choices in consumer products a good thing?
4. To what extent do celebrities believe in their product lines?

In a further attempt to reduce demand characteristics, the three dependent variables were embedded within 27 other items taken from a scale measuring consumer needs for uniqueness (Tian & Beardon, 2001), the World Values Survey (Abramson & Inglehart, 1995; Inglehart, 1997) and consumption patterns. The dependent variables were as follows:

1. We will be able to remedy the changes posed by global warming.
2. The crisis presented by global warming has been greatly exaggerated.
3. It is the responsibility of every person to take steps to reduce global warming.

All respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed with each statement on the following 5-point scale: 1 = not at all, 2 = slightly, 3 = moderately, 4 = mostly, and 5 = completely.

### Procedure

Participants were directed to Survey Monkey where they completed informed consent and were randomly assigned to one of four conditions:

1. Celebrity efforts to go green (experimental)
2. Celebrity purchasing patterns (control)
3. Mating preferences for partners who go green (experimental)
4. Mating preferences based on purchasing patterns (control)

All participants read the same passage on consumer trends with each manipulation embedded within. The specific messages can be found in Appendices A and B but, briefly, the celebrity experimental condition received the message that celebrities have been launching green products and have tried to reduce their carbon footprint whereas the control group received the message that celebrities have simply been launching their own product lines and people are attuned to celebrity purchases. The participants in the mating preference experimental condition received the message that social scientists have found evidence for greater attraction to members of the opposite sex who make efforts to go green and make green purchases. Participants in the control mating preference condition received the message that attraction can be influenced by the purchasing patterns of the opposite sex.

Survey Monkey randomly assigned participants to the various conditions but did so unevenly. Specifically, 12 males were assigned to the celebrity experimental condition and 9 were assigned to the celebrity control condition. Twenty-six females were assigned to the celebrity experimental condition and 19 to the celebrity control condition. In the mating preference conditions, 8 males were assigned to the experimental condition and 16 were assigned to the control condition. Seventeen females were assigned to the mating preference experimental condition and 24 to the mating preference control condition.

## RESULTS

Descriptive data on the dependent variables are presented in Table 1. Only 11.4% of the respondents mostly or completely agreed with the statement that we will be able to remedy the changes posed by global warming. Only 18.2% of the respondents mostly or completely agreed with the statement that global warming has been exaggerated. The majority of respondents (65.9%) mostly or completely agreed that it is the responsibility of every person to take steps to reduce global warming.

Table 1. Descriptive data on attitudes towards global warming.

Item	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Mostly	Completely
We will be able to remedy the changes posed by global warming.	20 (15.3%)	48 (36.6%)	48 (36.6%)	13 (9.9%)	2 (1.5%)
The crisis presented by global warming has been greatly exaggerated.	49 (37.1%)	38 (28.8%)	21 (15.9%)	14 (10.6%)	10 (7.6%)
It is the responsibility of every person to take steps to reduce global warming.	5 (3.8%)	14 (10.6%)	26 (19.7%)	38 (28.8%)	49 (37.1%)

### Gender Differences, Income Levels, and Education

There were no significant effects for education level on attitudes. As for gender, females ( $M=2.59$ ) were significantly more likely to endorse the statement that we will be able to remedy the changes posed by global warming compared to males [ $M=2.20$ ;  $t(129)=-2.36$ ,  $p=.020$ ]. Males ( $M=2.56$ ) were significantly more likely to agree that the crisis presented by global warming has been greatly exaggerated compared to females [ $M=2.06$ ;  $t(130)=2.18$ ,  $p=.031$ ]. Females ( $M=4.06$ ) were significantly more likely to endorse that it is the responsibility of every person to take steps to reduce global warming compared to males [ $M=3.44$ ;  $t(130)=-2.99$ ,  $p=.003$ ].

A series of ANOVAs were performed to see whether income level affected attitudes towards global warming. A significant effect for income level was obtained for the statement that it is the responsibility of every person to take steps to reduce global warming [ $F(5, 124)=3.01$ ,  $p=.013$ ]. Table 2 shows mean scores on this DV for each income level. Post-hoc LSD tests revealed that those making over \$75,000 had significantly lower endorsement of this statement compared to those making \$0 - \$15,000 ( $p=.012$ ), \$30,000 - \$45,000 ( $p=.026$ ), \$45,000 - \$60,000 ( $p=.011$ ), and \$60,000 - \$75,000 ( $p=.001$ ). Those making \$60,000 - \$75,000 agreed with the statement significantly more than those making \$15,000 - \$30,000 ( $p=.037$ ).

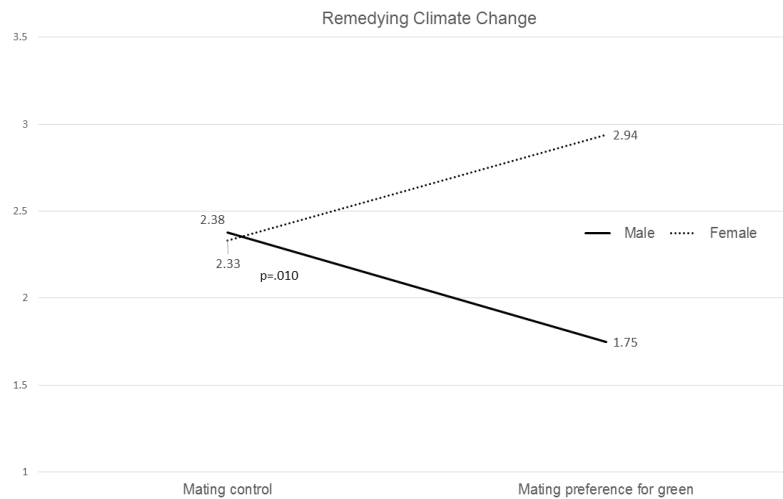
Table 2. Income levels as they relate to the statement “it is the responsibility of every person to take steps to reduce global warming.”

Income Level	Mean	SD
\$0 - \$15,000	4.00	1.08
\$15,000 - \$30,000	3.72	1.10
\$30,000 - \$45,000	3.95	1.15
\$45,000 - \$60,000	4.05	1.36
\$60,000 - \$75,000	4.50	.52
\$75,000 and higher	3.20	1.12

### Main Effects and Interaction Effects for the Celebrity Manipulation, Mating Preferences Manipulation, and Gender

A series of two-way ANOVAs was also conducted with gender and mating preferences on the dependent variables. There were no main effects for the mating preference manipulation on the dependent variables. However, on being able to remedy the changes posed by global warming, a main effect was obtained for gender [ $F(1, 61)=6.15, p=.016, \text{partial } \eta\text{-squared}=.092$ ] and an interaction effect was obtained between gender and the mating preference manipulation [ $F(1, 61)=7.07, p=.010, \text{partial } \eta\text{-squared}=.104$ ]. As can be seen in Figure 1, females informed of green mating preferences had higher optimism about remedying climate change whereas males were more pessimistic.

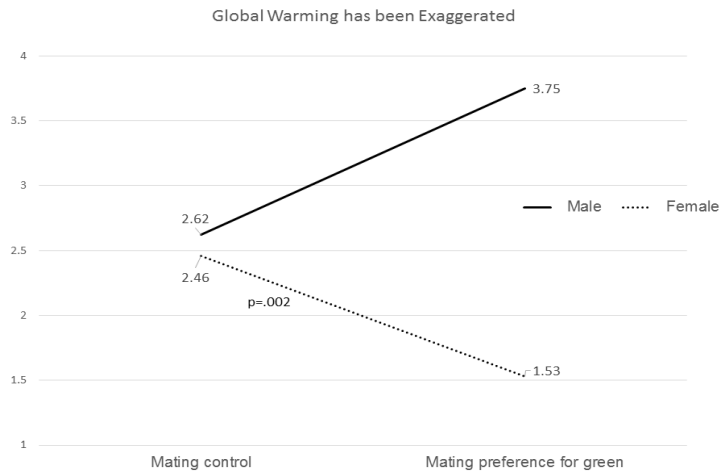
Figure 1. The effect of gender and mating preferences on remedying global warming



A main effect for gender also emerged for the statement that the crisis posed by global warming has been greatly exaggerated [ $F(1,61)=19.79, p=.001, \text{partial } \eta\text{-squared}=.192$ ] along with an interaction between gender and the mating preferences manipulation [ $F(1,61)=14.65, p=.002, \text{partial } \eta\text{-squared}=.149$ ]. Males informed of opposite-sex mating preferences for green partners were more likely to say global warming was exaggerated whereas females were less likely to say it was exaggerated (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. The effect of gender and mating preferences on the exaggeration of global warming



A third two-way ANOVA was conducted with the dependent variable being the responsibility of every person to take steps to reduce global warming. A non-significant, but trending, interaction between gender and the mating preference manipulation [ $F(1,61)=3.40$ ,  $p=.070$ ,  $partial\ eta\ squared=.053$ ] was obtained such that females endorsed greater responsibility for every person in reducing global warming than males, when informed of opposite-sex mating preferences for green individuals (see Figure 3).

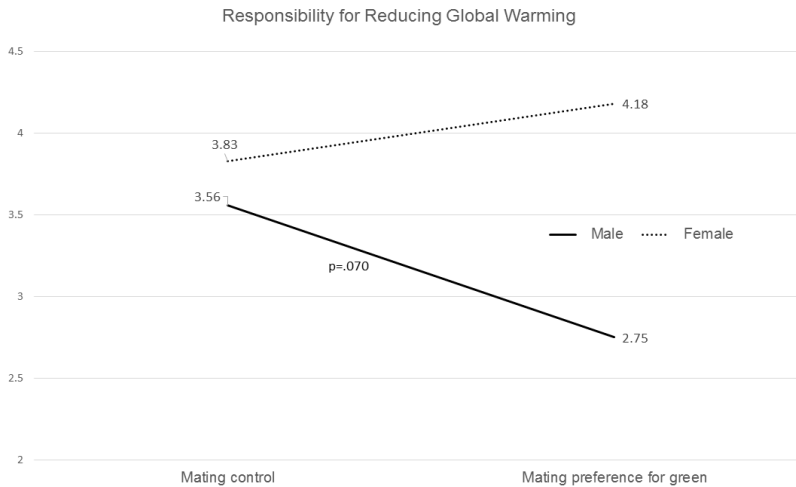


Figure 3. The effect of gender and mating preferences on responsibility for global warming

A series of two-way ANOVAs were performed examining the effects of gender and celebrity on the dependent variables. There were no main effects for celebrity on any of the three dependent variables and no interaction effects between the celebrity condition and gender on the dependent variables.

### DISCUSSION

The present study sought to determine whether it was possible to shift climate change attitudes by presenting individuals with information connected to celebrity or mating preferences. In addition, the effects of income and gender on climate change attitudes were evaluated. The interpretation of the results starts with descriptive data before moving on to the key findings.

The descriptive data obtained in the study was broadly reflective of the country as a whole in relation to climate change attitudes (Saad, 2007, 2014) in that those denying the significance of climate change were clearly in the minority. The majority of participants believed we all have responsibility for the problem and that it had not been exaggerated. However, a fairly large proportion (51.9%) were pessimistic about remedying the changes posed by global warming.

Income levels were associated with denial of responsibility for global warming such that those with incomes over \$75,000 had significantly greater denial than those in lower income intervals. It could be that the higher denial in this group is due to justification of the favorable status quo. Or, attitudes could have been shifted as a result of dissonance stemming from overconsumption of resources and excessive energy use. Indirect evidence for both theories comes from the fact that the carbon footprint rises with income levels and those making over \$75,000 consume close to twice the energy of those making less than \$10,000 (Brownsberger, 2008).

Consistent with other studies (McCright, 2010), significant gender differences were observed on attitudes related to climate change. Specifically, females were more optimistic about remedying the problem of global warming than males. However, it should be noted that neither gender was overly optimistic about remedying the problem. One possible interpretation of this finding is that females have a more positive outlook because of underlying sex differences in cognition. For example, females have greater long-range connectivity in the brain (less laterality), than males, which may lead to broader or more flexible patterns of thinking about the problem of, and solutions to, global warming (Tomasi & Volkow, 2012).

In addition, gender differences were observed in responsibility to reduce global warming. Males were less likely to agree with the statement, "It the responsibility of all people to reduce global warming." Again this difference could be attributed to underlying differences in gender, with females being more likely endorse egalitarian attitudes or shared efforts towards climate change due to evolved differences in the sexual division of labor, with gathering and child rearing requiring more collaboration (Panter-Brick, 2002). Furthermore, males agreed to a greater extent than females that the problem of global warming has been exaggerated, which could be a way to minimize the discrepancy, and dissonance,

between wasteful behavior and green values, although the present study was not equipped to test this hypothesis.

Significant interaction effects between the mating preference condition and gender were detected; however, the differences went against our predictions. No gender differences were observed in the control mating preference condition. Females in the experimental mating preference condition had more positive attitudes about remedying challenges posed by global warming and were less likely to endorse the statement that global warming crisis is over-exaggerated. In essence, when females were told members of the opposite sex were more attracted to green individuals, females changed their attitudes to match the opposite sex's preference. Males in the green mating preference condition did not shift their attitude to match the preference of females. In fact, males' attitude appears to be in direct contrast with what they were told females prefer.

This may seem counter-intuitive for proponents of sexual selection theory and, more specifically, parental investment theory (Trivers, 1972), which would argue that the sex that invests more into reproduction establishes the parameters of mating. The preferences of the higher investing sex should be matched by the opposite sex to appear as a desirable mate. Based on predictions drawn from theory, it would be expected that males may modify their behavior, or in this case, attitude, to fit the mating preferences of females. We can identify at least two explanations for our unexpected, yet significant findings. First, the mating context may have primed hyper-competitiveness in males. This hyper-competitiveness could compel males to narrow their perspective to the immediate context in which acquiring more resources in the short term could produce an advantage over other males. In turn, this may drive less optimistic attitudes regarding climate change. This interpretation is consistent with previous research, which demonstrated that hypercompetitiveness mediated the relationship between insecure status striving, overconsumption and pessimism regarding climate change (Sturman, Dufford, Bremser, & Chantel, 2017).

An alternative explanation for the pattern of findings observed in females is that the green mating context may activate future oriented neural programs in women, rather than hyper-competitiveness. When primed with a mating context, females' thinking may be propelled towards the future. For example, most females judiciously juggle the immediate benefits and costs of their mating behavior against their long-term goals in order to secure the best possible mate. Once activated by this context, attitudes may become more future oriented and optimistic.

### Limitations and Future Directions

Although participants were randomly assigned to condition, more females participated than males. In addition, 94% of the sample was Caucasian. This homogeneity limits the generalizability of the findings, but the sample does reflect the population of the area in which the study was conducted (upstate New York). Also, it should be noted that levels of denial were similar to those seen across the broader population of the U.S. The null findings regarding status striving in the celebrity manipulation could be due to the ineffectiveness of the celebrity manipulation used. Replicating this finding using a stronger, or more focused

attempt to produce celebrity endorsements for or against climate change could reveal whether differences were present but undetectable as measured. Another limitation was the uneven random assignment committed by the online survey tool. The result was that some groups were much smaller than others, which would have increased the possibility of sampling error. However, despite these errors and relatively small numbers in some groups, the data nevertheless revealed significant main effects for gender and significant interactions.

While the present study examined attitudes related to climate change, future research could examine whether messages related to status and mating preferences affect pro-environmental real-world behavior. Griskevicius et al. (2010) have manipulated status-striving in a series of experiments but we did not find any experiments that have manipulated mating preferences to see the effect on green behavior. We see great value in examining evolutionary constructs in relation to climate change as ignorance of our basic human nature and human tendencies will only lead to ineffective interventions.

To conclude, the present research demonstrated that males and those making more than 75 thousand dollars in income were more likely to deny that people should bear responsibility for dealing with climate change. Additionally, females were more optimistic than males that humans would be able to remedy climate change and deny that it has been exaggerated. Contrary to expectations, females, rather than males, were more likely to adjust their attitudes when informed of green mating preferences. There are a number of possible explanations for this finding including the greater future orientation of females in mating considerations and dissonance on the part of males. Future research would benefit from actually incorporating measures of consumptive behavior in order to test these hypotheses. The preliminary research presented here casts some doubt on the susceptibility of people to celebrity influence but shows that one possible mechanism for altering attitudes may be to appeal to mating preferences.

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## APPENDIX A

### Celebrity Manipulation

Following the Industrial Revolution, companies were able to produce goods in mass quantities and at lower prices. As new products became more attainable, people began to seek out goods that would presumably free up their time for more enjoyable pursuits or provide them with entertainment. The term “consumerism” was coined after World War II, and since that time marketing and advertising agencies have become more scientific in their approach so that they may identify factors driving material purchases.

With the advent of modern computer technology, companies have been able to target consumer preferences with increased accuracy. Shopping is increasingly conducted online. Recently, \_\_\_\_\_ (INSERTED TEXT – SEE BELOW).

By choosing to purchase specific goods, we are able to create an image for ourselves. This may serve a role in forming social groups, allowing us to recognize others who share our preferences. Consumer purchases are increasingly used to establish a person’s identity and distinguish him/her from others who do not share their values. It seems that marketing agencies and advertisers are now at a turning point in their ability to target preferences and provide products for people looking to set themselves apart.

#### Inserted text for Experimental condition:

“a number of high-profile celebrities have launched green product lines and influential members of the community have been quick to purchase them. Other celebrities have been actively trying to reduce their carbon footprint by purchasing energy efficient automobiles or moving towards energy efficient homes that use renewable sources of energy, thereby promoting a completely new industry.”

#### Inserted text for Control condition:

“a number of high profile celebrities have launched product lines and members of the community have been quick to purchase them. Other celebrities have received a great deal of attention for the types of automobiles they drive or the homes they own, spawning a new industry.”

#### Questions following the manipulation:

1. To what extent do you believe companies are intruding on people’s privacy in order to target their preferences?
2. To what extent do you believe values are reflected in our purchases?
3. To what extent is the trend towards more choices in consumer products a good thing?
4. To what extent do celebrities believe in their product lines?

Scale: 1=not at all, 5=Completely



## APPENDIX B

### Mating Preferences Manipulation

Following the Industrial Revolution, companies were able to produce goods in mass quantities and at lower prices. As new products became more attainable, people began to seek out goods that would presumably free up their time for more enjoyable pursuits or provide them with entertainment. The term “consumerism” was coined after World War II, and since that time marketing and advertising agencies have become more scientific in their approach so that they may identify factors driving material purchases.

With the advent of modern computer technology, companies have been able to target consumer preferences with increased accuracy. Shopping is increasingly conducted online. Recently, a number of high profile celebrities have launched product lines and members of the community have been quick to purchase them. Other celebrities have received a great deal of attention for the types of automobiles they drive or the homes they own, spawning a new industry.

By choosing to purchase specific goods, we are able to create an image for ourselves. This may serve a role in forming social groups, allowing us to recognize others who share our preferences. Consumer purchases are increasingly used to establish a person’s identity and distinguish him/her from others who do not share their values. \_\_\_\_\_ (INSERTED TEXT - SEE BELOW). It seems that marketing agencies and advertisers are now at a turning point in their ability to target preferences and provide products for people looking to set themselves apart.

#### Inserted text for Experimental condition:

“Social scientists have increasingly found that men and woman show higher attraction to members of the opposite sex who make efforts to go green. This may come in the form of green automobiles, purchasing green products, or conserving energy in the home.”

#### Inserted text for Control condition:

“Social scientists have found that men and women’s attraction to the opposite sex is based in part on their consumer preferences. This includes the types of automobile and store purchases.”

#### Questions following the manipulation:

1. To what extent do you believe companies are intruding on people’s privacy in order to target their preferences?
2. To what extent do you believe values are reflected in our purchases?

3. To what extent is the trend towards more choices in consumer products a good thing?
4. To what extent do celebrities believe in their product lines?

Scale: 1=not at all, 5=Completely