

Playful adults preferred in choice of partner

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Playful adults are fond of wordplay, like improvising, approach a challenge lightheartedly, take pleasure in unusual things, deal with others in a playful way, enjoy teasing - and create situations in which they and others are entertained: Playfulness in humans has many facets. In psychology, however, comparatively little research has been conducted into playfulness in adulthood.

The American anthropologist Garry Chick from Pennsylvania State University only recently developed a theory that playfulness in adults is a desirable trait in [sexual selection](#): To women, it indicates a low level of aggression in men and to men vitality in women. An initial study including surveys conducted among American students supports this hypothesis - and now René Proyer and Lisa Wagner from the Department of Psychology at the University of Zurich show in a study published in the *American Journal of Play* that playfulness also plays an important role in the choice of a partner in the European culture.

More than 320 young adults polled

The UZH researchers conducted their follow-up study with 327 [young adults](#) from Germany, Switzerland and Austria. The participants were asked to examine a list of 16 characteristics and indicate whether or not they found them desirable in a future or potential partner for long-term relationships. The results showed that men and women largely agreed in their orders of preference - although there were differences in individual ratings: Women found a sense of humor more important than men and men found an exciting personality more important than women.

Friendliness, intelligence, humor and a fun tendency came at the top of the list. Playfulness ranked mid-table, although not all that far behind the favorites. "Therefore, this personality trait also seems important for the choice of partner - at least more so than the partner having a degree, good genes or being religious," says psychologist Proyer, explaining the results.

Moreover, further analyses revealed that participants who described themselves as playful also valued playfulness, humor, a laid-back attitude, a fun tendency and creativity among potential partners themselves. And the participants who were in relationships assessed themselves as more playful than those who were currently single. "Although we should be cautious while interpreting the data, this could be an indication that playful people are actually perceived as more attractive partners or that playfulness increasingly develops in the relationship," says Proyer.

More information: Proyer, R. T., & Wagner, L.. Playfulness in adults revisited: The signal theory in German speakers. *American Journal of Play*, February 24, 2015.

Provided by University of Zurich

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