



The ideal romantic partner personality

Aurelio José Figueredo *, Jon Adam Sefcek, Daniel Nelson Jones

Department of Psychology, University of Arizona, P.O. Box 210068, Tucson, AZ 85721-0068, United States

Received 15 October 2005; received in revised form 25 January 2006; accepted 16 February 2006

Available online 11 May 2006

Abstract

Most contemporary social psychological studies on inter-personal attraction have independently explored the competing concepts of similarity and complementarity. Incorporating evolutionary principles associated with assortative mating, two studies were conducted that examined individual difference preferences using the five-factor model (FFM) of human personality as assessed by the NEO-FFI. The first study ($N = 104$) examined the degree to which individuals showed an absolute or relative preference in an “ideal romantic partner” when compared to self-rated personality. The second study ($N = 161$) extended this by incorporating personality ratings for self, “ideal” romantic partner, and “actual” romantic partner, and perceptions of mate value for each. Overall, findings supported both evolutionary and social psychological theories of inter-personal attraction and support both relative and absolute preferences in romantic partners. Individuals sought mates that were matches of themselves to some degree (a concept that we termed aspirational positive assortative mating) but also sought mates that were somewhat higher in Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Mate Value, but lower in Neuroticism than themselves.

© 2006 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Personality; Assortative mating; Mate value; Big-five

* Corresponding author. Tel./fax: +1 520 621 7444.
E-mail address: ajf@u.arizona.edu (A.J. Figueredo).

1. Introduction

There are two dominant approaches to the study of personality and mate choice: (1) the study of *absolute* preferences for one personality trait over another, also called *consensual* preferences because they are observed to be similar across all individuals; and (2) that of *relative* preferences for a sexual romantic partner's personality in relation to one's own personality. This second type of preference presumes assortative mating according to personality, and this type comes in two possible varieties: (1) *positive* assortative mating, based on the presumed attraction to similarity in personality with one's sexual romantic partner (similarity theory), and (2) *negative* assortative mating, or *disassortative* mating, based on the presumed attraction to dissimilarity in personality with one's sexual romantic partner (complementarity theory).

There is evidence in the literature to support the existence of both consensual (*absolute*) and assortative (*relative*) preferences for romantic partner personality in human mate choice. However, the published studies we reviewed tested either one of these hypotheses or the other exclusively and never appear to have tested both of them simultaneously using a single sample. In the spirit of strong inference (Platt, 1964), we conducted two related studies to pit these hypotheses against each other by statistically controlling absolute preferences for relative ones. The second of these studies also pits these two hypotheses against another derived from evolutionary psychology: assortative mating of actual romantic partners by perceived mate value rather than by idealized standards of personality.

People have concepts of what an “ideal” romantic partner should be, and that often people do “idealize” their current romantic partners (Fletcher & Simpson, 2000; Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996). Further, consistency between ideal standards and current romantic partner characteristics may function in initiating and maintaining relationships (Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 1999). Although there are many characteristics that people see as ideal in a romantic partner, no one romantic partner is going to exemplify all such preferences. As such, trade-offs will be made in mate-selection, with some of these characteristics being more important than others (Fletcher, Tither, O'Loughlin, Friesen, & Overall, 2004). These standards may serve three basic functions; evaluation, explanation, and regulation of the current romantic relationship (Fletcher & Simpson).

1.1. *Absolute and relative mating preferences*

Many studies have examined *absolute* preferences in the personality traits of potential romantic partners. For example, in both national and international samples (Buss, 1985, 1989), found that the two most highly ranked characteristics in a romantic partner by both men and women were “kind and understanding” and “intelligent”. In another study (Buss & Barnes, 1986), these two top-ranked traits were joined by “exciting personality” on the list of consensual traits most desired by both men and women in a romantic partner. Reported in the same paper, the 10 most highly valued mate characteristics were “good companion”, “considerate”, “honest”, “affectionate”, “dependable”, “intelligent”, “kind”, “understanding”, “interesting to talk to”, and “loyal”.

Other studies have examined *relative* preferences in the personality traits of potential romantic partners. The majority of studies on assortative mating for personality have found small but significant positive correlations across romantic partners on the order of .20 (Buss, 1985). One study

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/893395>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/893395>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)