A Cross-Cultural Study of Assortative Pairing for Sensational Interests, Mate Value, Life History, and Delinquency

Un estudio transcultural sobre apareamiento selectivo según Intereses sensacionalistas, valor como pareja, historia de vida y delincuencia

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To investigate whether sensational interests (SIQ-R), mate value (MVI), or life history strategy (Mini-K) drive assortative pairing between individuals on delinquency (D-20), independently sampled pairs of opposite-sex romantic partners and pairs of same-sex friends rated both themselves and each other on these traits. Whereas assortative mating has been defined as “sexual choice for traits similar to one’s own” (Miller, 2000), assortative pairing is a more general term denoting the tendency to select friends or lovers who possess traits similar to one’s own (Rushton, 1989). These preferences may be based on the detection of genetic similarity; selecting individuals similar to oneself may result in greater altruism towards partners (whether social or sexual) as well as potential offspring (Rushton, 1989). Previous studies on sensational interests, both within the United States (Weiss, Egan, & Figueredo, 2004) and cross-culturally (Egan, Figueredo, Wolf, McBride, Sefcek, Vásquez, & Charles, 2005), supported the hypothesis that they served as a form of sexual display by showing that they were significantly correlated with mating effort across various different cultures. Mating effort, however, serves simultaneously as: (1) a predictor of delinquency (Rowe, Vazsonyi, & Figueredo, 1997), (2) an indicator of life history strategy (Figueroa, Sefcek, Vásquez, Brumbach, King, & Jacobs, 2005), and (3) a correlate of socially desirable personality traits contributing to mate value (Egan, Figueredo, Wolf, McBride, Sefcek, Vásquez, & Charles, 2005; Figueredo, Sefcek, & Jones, 2006; Vásquez, 2004). The present study addressed these ambiguities by measuring these three related constructs instead of mating effort and correlating them with sensational interests. Furthermore, it remained uncertain whether sensational interests functioned primarily in intrasexual or in intersexual display. The present study addressed these uncertainties by comparing the associative pairing on these traits of same-sex friends to that of opposite-sex romantic partners.

This study was replicated in four different cultures: Tucson, Arizona (104 pairs of lovers, 103 pairs of friends), Hermosillo, Sonora (147 pairs of lovers, 113 pairs of friends), San José, Costa Rica (101 pairs of lovers, 122 pairs of friends), and three Gypsy (Roma) villages (Drenovac, Mirijevo, Rakovica) in Serbia (123 males, 229 females). Samples of pairs of opposite-sex romantic partners and pairs of same-sex friends were collected in local bars, clubs, coffee houses, and other such public places. Tucson, Arizona, pairs (friends and lovers) demonstrated good inter-rater reliability for all traits measured. Tucson pairs believed that they were assortatively paired. Tucson lovers assortatively mated only on sensational interests (SIQ-R), but not on life history strategy (Mini-K), mate value (MVI), or delinquency (D-20). Tucson friends assortatively paired on three out of four traits measured, but not on mate value (MVI). Hermosillo, Sonora, pairs demonstrated good inter-rater reliability for all traits measured. Hermosillo pairs believed that they were assortatively paired. Hermosillo lovers assortatively mated on all four traits measured: sensational interests (SIQ-R), life history strategy (Mini-K), mate value (MVI), and delinquency (D-20). Hermosillo friends assortatively paired on all four traits measured: sensational interests (SIQ-R), life history strategy (Mini-K), mate value (MVI), and delinquency (D-20).

San José, Costa Rica, pairs demonstrated good inter-rater reliability for all traits measured. San José pairs believed that they were assortatively paired. San José lovers assortatively mated on mate value (MVI) and delinquency (D-20), but not on sensational interests (SIQ-R) or life history strategy (Mini-K). San José friends assortatively paired on all four traits measured: sensational interests (SIQ-R), life history strategy (Mini-K), mate value (MVI), and delinquency (D-20). Gypsy (Roma) pairs demonstrated very poor inter-rater reliabilities for all traits measured. Gypsy lovers nonetheless believed that they were assortatively paired. Gypsy lovers assortatively mated on none of the four traits measured: not on sensational interests (SIQ-R), life history strategy (Mini-K), mate value (MVI), or delinquency (D-20). In all four cross-cultural replications, the within-person correlations among all four traits were similar for self, friends, and lovers. Inter-rater reliabilities, perceived assortative pairing coefficients, and actual assortative pairing coefficients were high for pairs of friends on all four traits. However, although inter-rater reliabilities and perceived assortative pairing coefficients were high for pairs of lovers on all four traits, actual assortative pairing coefficients for pairs of lovers varied cross-culturally and were generally lower than for pairs of friends. The fact that the Gypsy assortative mating coefficients for lovers were particularly anomalous was probably due to the high proportion of arranged marriages in that culture. It is also possible that differential parental influences on mating decisions across cultures might be responsible for some of the variability among our samples. These results suggest that sensational interests function as sexual displays intrasexually more commonly than intersexually, but that these displays do not drive assortative pairing on delinquency.

References


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