

Daniel Bergem Blikås

The Ideal Partner - Big Five and Personality Preferences

Bachelor's thesis in Psychology

Supervisor: Mons Bendixen

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Supervisors: Mons Bendixen & Leif Edward Ottesen Kennair & Thomas Haarklau Kleppestø

Preface

This project was a study of “Personality and Partner Choice”, focusing on the personality traits and social dominance orientation of the respondents, and those of their “ideal partners”. This topic and its scope were decided upon by the project planners, who also selected the item inventories that the digital questionnaire would be based on. Under the project planners’ supervision, the students assisted in translating and formulating the questionnaire questions, and coordinated and conducted the data collection.

Introductory lectures on the relevant research literature and how to approach potential respondents during survey recruitment, were given by the supervisors. The data collection was then given a timetable. Upon completion of the data collection, the supervisors gave lectures on how to operate SPSS, and how to appropriately process and analyse the data. The supervisors recommended three broad thesis questions to everyone. I chose the one that gave me the most creative freedom, and, after a general discussion with my supervisor, narrowed down the thesis independently after reviewing literature in various databases. Tools used for literature search include ScienceDirect and Google Scholar, as well as the literature provided by our supervisors.

I have attended lectures, participated in organisation and execution of respondent recruitment, and contributed with clarifying questions to the supervisors on the shared Microsoft Teams channel. This paper is the result of an independent writing process. I still wish to thank my classmates for their cooperation and performance during the data collection, which resulted in a good data sample and a solid foundation for my thesis. I also must thank our supervisors for their thorough efforts in teaching and instructing us to the best of their ability, and for their patience throughout the semester.

Abstract

Personality has been thoroughly researched, and the field of personality psychology has produced numerous personality models, including the Big Five Model, mapping out constituent traits. Mate choice and personality have been tied together in the literature by the concept of Assortative Mating. While not as thoroughly explored, Social Dominance Orientation has been a researched topic for decades, revealing links between personality and political attitudes. Social Dominance Orientation has demonstrated predictive power for a person's political views, and strong correlations to those of their partner. The question of whether Aspirational Assortative Mating applies to Social Dominance Orientation or not, however, is not as thoroughly researched. This study will look at this gap in the literature by examining Social Dominance Orientation and Openness. The sample used were NTNU students ($N = 637$) who completed an online questionnaire. This questionnaire consisted of a translated version of the IPIP-NEO-60 inventory, as well as a translated item inventory on Social Dominance Orientation. Pearson correlation analyses were performed to investigate the correlations between respondent and ideal partner personalities, with focus on the traits Openness and Social Dominance Orientation. The results showed strong positive correlations between respondent and ideal partner personalities, and very strong correlations between respondents and ideal partners' Social Dominance Orientations. T-tests were performed to look for Aspirational Assortative Mating in both traits Openness and Social Dominance Orientation. Aspirational Assortative Mating was found for both Social Dominance Orientation and Openness.

Sammendrag

Personlighet er et tema det har blitt forsket grundig på. Personlighetspsykologien har produsert flere ulike modeller, inkludert «Big Five», med kartlegging av personlighetstrekk som formål. Partnervalg og personlighet er i dag knyttet sammen av et fenomen som i litteraturen ofte blir kalt «Assortative Mating». Et konsept som ikke er like grundig undersøkt, men som likevel har vært et viktig forskningstema i flere tiår nå, er «Sosial Dominansorientering», ofte forkortet «SDO» på engelsk. Sosial dominansorientering har empirisk avslørt forbindelser mellom personlighet og politiske holdninger. Sosial dominansorientering har blitt påvist sterk predikerende evne for noens politiske syn. Sosial dominansorientering korrelerer også sterkt mellom mennesker i parforhold. Spørsmålet om hvorvidt «Aspirational Assortative Mating» gjelder Sosial dominansorientering er ikke utforsket i samme grad. Denne studien kommer til å ta stilling til dette lite utforskede området i litteraturen ved å undersøke Sosial dominansorientering og personlighetstrekket Åpenhet. Utvalget som er brukt består av studenter ved NTNU ($N = 637$) som besvarte en digital spørreundersøkelse. Spørreundersøkelsen besto av «IPIP-NEO-60»-spørreskjemaet og et «SDO»-spørreskjema oversatt til norsk. Korrelasjonsanalyser av typen Pearson ble kjørt for å undersøke korrelasjonene mellom personligheten til deltakerne og deres idealpartnere, med fokus på Åpenhet og Sosial dominansorientering. Resultatene viste sterke korrelasjoner mellom deltakerne og deres idealpartners personligheter og sosiale dominansorienteringer. Det ble videre gjort t-tester for å se etter «Aspirational Assortative Mating» i trekkene Åpenhet og Sosial dominansorientering. Aspirational Assortative Mating ble funnet for både Sosial dominansorientering og Åpenhet.

The Ideal Partner - Big Five and Personality Preferences

Romantic companionship is something most people desire. Alongside having a career and owning one's own house, finding a romantic partner and having children are among the most important cornerstones of what many would consider a desirable life. However, finding a partner is difficult, and finding an ideal partner is even more so. There are many factors that men and women, women and women, and men and men use to evaluate potential romantic partners. Height, health, beauty, cultural background, political orientation, earning potential and personality are some examples. Some of the qualities mentioned, like health and earning potential, lead to resource acquisition. Others, like political orientation or personality traits, are linked to divorce rates (Solomon & Jackson, 2014, p. 989), and are thus important for stable child-raising and cooperation between partners. Therefore, from an evolutionary perspective, good earning potential and good genetics is not all that matters. Picking a partner with the ideal personality is equally important to higher chances of survival, better reproductive prospects, and a better quality of life. The question then becomes what are ideal personality traits and ideal partners?

The Big Five Model is a central theoretical framework in the field of personality psychology. As a trait theory model, it organises personality into traits and states that these traits are the causal factors behind the way persons behave (Kennair & Hagen, 2015, p. 109). One central reason why people pick their partners is for what they do. In the research for this study, in addition to the Big Five Model, Social Dominance Orientation was also investigated. This is another aspect of personality, that is linked to people's tolerance of hierarchical structures and layers in society, institutions, and differences between people, and it is not accounted for by the Big Five Model. It is said that people are their actions, and if actions are in large part a result of personality, then a person can be said to be their personality. These models therefore have relevance for partner preferences and the choice of the ideal partner.

Theoretical Background

Personality

Personality is a complex aspect of the human condition. People differ in interests, intelligence, temperament, and empathy. They also vary in their favourite seasons, animals and colours, as well as their proclivities for certain behaviours, and predispositions to mental illnesses and political opinions. In addition to seeing personality as the inner workings of an individual's mind, it can also be understood on (at least) two more levels: One could look at the interpersonal effects personality has on individuals and their interactions and relationships. Another aspect is how personality unfolds in relation to views on public policy. In the context of psychological research, it is useful to look at more specific or systematic definitions of the concept of personality.

One way to define personality is as a “set of psychological traits and mechanisms” that exists “within the individual” that are “organized and relatively enduring” and that “influence his or her interactions with, and adaptations to, the intrapsychic, physical, and social environments” (Larsen & Buss, 2018, p. 4). This definition broadly accounts for the complex aspects of personality mentioned, and the levels at which it operates. It distinguishes and organises the psychological domain traits and encompasses their social components. In addition, it also addresses the permanence of personality, the fact that such “traits” are enduring across time for an individual.

The field of psychology has produced different models to systematically explain personality, that fit this definition. Using combinations of the lexical, theoretical, and statistical approaches, researchers have produced models of personality that include Eysenck's hierarchical model of personality and Wiggins' circumplex of personality (Larsen & Buss, 2018, p. 72). Eysenck's model organizes personality into traits at different hierarchical levels

that subsume other traits at a lower level, with three super-traits at the top of the hierarchies. This model has a strong biological foundation but is also limited by the author's choice of super-traits. Wiggins' circumplex model places traits within the framework of a two-dimensional compass, defining the relationships between the traits within this compass. This circumplex model is, however, limited by a low number of axioms.

The Big Five Model of Personality, and other personality dimensions

Today, the leading model of personality in the field of psychology, is the Big Five Model of Personality (BFM). The Big Five Model organises personality into the five domains Neuroticism (N), Extraversion (E), Openness (O), Agreeableness (A) and Conscientiousness (C). Like other personality models, the BFM uses broad traits that subsume other, more specific traits under them. While Wiggins and Eysenck's respective models can be criticised for being either too narrow and exclusionary of certain traits or axioms, or subsuming traits that should remain at a higher hierarchical level, the BFM and its five main domains or traits has demonstrated strong replicability and reliability across cultures. Unlike other models, like Wiggins' three-factor hierarchical model of personality, which primarily focuses on and explains traits that have biological foundations, the five-factor BFM focuses on a more complete set of traits, independent of purely biological underpinnings (McCrae & Costa, 1985). The Wiggins circumplex model is also limited by a two-dimensional set of axioms, whereas the BFM is not.

The Big Five Model of Personality is, however, not a complete model, nor does it claim to be. There are aspects of individual differences in personality that are better conceptualized and measured by other models and scales. One example of this is the dimension of Social Dominance Orientation (SDO). SDO explains and predicts certain

individual attitudes that BFM does not. Still, SDO is correlated with certain BFM personality traits, and in some ways behaves like a personality trait itself, in that it dictates behaviour. For example, a high score on a SDO-measuring instrument is predictive of being low in BFM trait Openness (Ho et al., 2015, p. 1019). Social Dominance Orientation has also been known to align with and predict political orientation (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999, p. 49), and is strongly correlated between partners, a fact well-established in both psychology and politics. The Dark Triad is another example of personality dimensions that are not measured accurately by the BFM. There are competing personality models currently in use that aim to make measurements similar to those of the BFM. An example of such a competing model is the HEXACO model of personality, which, through its addition of the Humility and Honesty trait (H), better explains variation in dimensions like the Dark Triad dimensions (Lee & Ashton, 2005, p. 1579). However, the BFM is still the most used personality model in the field. And while some of the research cited in this study uses the HEXACO model, the questionnaire used in this study is based on the Big Five Model of Personality.

Social Dominance Orientation

Social Dominance Orientation, coined in the 1990s, is a dimension of personality that measures a person's tolerance of hierarchies in society. A person scoring high on an inventory for SDO, will support institutions that maintain social classes and hierarchical structures in society, and support social policies enforcing these class structures and hierarchies. A person scoring low on an inventory for SDO, will favour policies levelling the social and economic landscape for groups across these hierarchies (Pratto et al., 1994, p. 743). High-scoring individuals will be more inclined to be prejudiced against other groups, and a high SDO is also linked to right-wing authoritarianism (Sibley & Duckitt, 2008, p. 24). More recent, contemporary research has replicated and shown that SDO can be separated into two sub-

components: SDO-D (Dominance) and SDO-E (Egalitarianism), relating to active dominance over other groups, and passive support of hierarchy-enhancing structures, respectively. In addition, recent research has further developed SDO-scales to measure this nuance in SDO (Ho et al., 2015, p. 1004).

High SDO scores support the “might-makes-right” mentality, or the survival of the fittest, in evolutionary terms. But a low SDO score has equally valid evolutionary underpinnings (Kleppetø et al., 2020, p. 6). As mentioned, the literature across fields shows that personality is important for initiation and maintenance of relationships. Having personalities that are politically congruent is even more important than the personality traits themselves (Alford et al., 2011, p. 376). Considering the importance SDO measures have for relationships, and the dimension’s link to personality, it is natural to include a scale for it in this study, if only as an additional personality trait.

Assortative Mating

“Assortative mating” (AM) refers to preference for partners with a personality resembling one’s own, and it is therefore central to the problem of identifying the ideal partner through their personality traits. “Assortative” refers to how populations sort themselves into couples through preferences. The literature describes different variations and theories of mating preferences and “assortment” works. The saying that “opposites attract”, presumes a negative Assortative Mating theory. One prefers and finds partners with dissimilar personality traits and qualities. This is also known as Complementarity. The attraction to and preference for similar romantic partners, presumes a positive Assortative Mating theory, also referred to as Similarity Theory or Similarity Preference. The fourth theoretical option would be the equivalent of a Null Hypothesis to the three aforementioned theories, the assumption of

Random Selection. People obviously still choose based on mate value, health and similar factors, but would under the Random Selection assumption not use personality as a variable.

Because it bears on the topic of Assortative Mating, it is worth clarifying that people do not rate a potential partner's personality based on individual traits. A cross-cultural sampling from 45 countries led to this insight. Computer simulations showed that across time, desirable traits are "assorted" and "pile up" in the same individuals, giving people a different desirability factor. This "d factor" implies that people with one desirable trait are likely to have others, but also that such traits co-vary (Conroy-Beam et al., 2019b, p. 483). The way in which people weigh desirable and preferred traits, was dubbed a "Euclidean model of preference integration". Real traits exist as points in relation to their ideal standard points. A person's d factor is the inverse of the distance to these standard points. Preference integration was demonstrated as cross-culturally valid (Conroy-Beam et al., 2019a, p. 5). In short, partners are evaluated through AM for their personality as a whole, and not individual traits.

Aspirational Assortative Mating

Aspirational Assortative Mating (AAM) adds to this base AM theory. AMM stipulates that partner choice, in addition to being influenced by compatibility through personality similarity, is also affected by personality desirability. That is, the desirability of individual traits in relation to mate value, described in the previous paragraph as the d factor. AMM therefore states that traits not only have relative desirability in relation to one's own subjective preferences, but that they also have fixed mate value associated with them in relation to the romantic market (Figueredo et al., 2006, p. 436). High and low scores are desirable for different traits. Objective desirability or "consensual preference" implies that there exists a consensus on the trait. Subjective desirability or "relative preference" implies that the demand

for the trait in one's partner depends on one's own supply. The traits that are known to be desired in higher intensity are Conscientiousness, Extraversion and Agreeableness, while Openness has a stronger similarity preference, and finally, neuroticism is desired in lower amounts. Figueredo et al. (2006) summarised similar points as follows:

In sum, these results suggest that traits individuals deem to be “ideal” in a romantic partner may be in fact both partially relative and partially absolute. Thus, individuals seek idealized romantic partners that share similar personality characteristics in relation to their own levels of all five factors. (p. 436)

These findings agree with Liu et al., who found people want a partner higher in traits Agreeableness Extraversion, and lower in trait Emotionality, according to the HEXACO personality model (Liu et al., 2018, p. 447).

To summarize: People prefer personalities overall similar to their own, but also with mate values equal to or higher than their own. There are dimensions to personality relevant to partner choice, like SDO, that the leading personality models, like the HEXACO and Big Five models, do not account for. SDO explains similarity between partners that these models do not. It is also known that AMM is valid for BFM. People “aspire” to higher mate values in their partners and gravitate toward personality trait levels that reflect this mate value.

High SDO predicts conservative political views (Pratto et al., 1994, p. 743), and negatively correlates with the personality trait Openness (Ho et al., 2015, p. 1019). Political views also correlate between partners. Finally, personality traits are subject to AM and AMM, and SDO to AM. These findings in the literature support the notion that SDO should be linked to Assortative Mating. To what degree AMM applies to Social Dominance Orientation, however, is relatively unclear.

The Present Study

Research often focuses on either personality and the development and validation of new personality models like the Big Five and HEXACO models, or Social Dominance Orientation. Both areas have also been looked at in relation to partner preferences and mate choice. The theories of Assortative Mating, Similarity Theory and Aspirational Assortative Mating have been thoroughly validated and used to explain partner personality preferences. SDO has also been shown relevant to Assortative Mating and Similarity Theory. It is a well-established correlate between partners and a good predictor of political views. However, SDO has not been examined to the same degree with regards to Aspirational Assortative Mating. There are significantly fewer studies in the literature that investigate AMM, personality and SDO at the same time.

This Study aims to replicate findings regarding Assortative Mating, Similarity Theory, and Aspirational Assortative Mating, and look at them in relation to SDO. This will be done by looking at correlations between BFM personality traits, and differences in partner preferences and comparing the findings with SDO.

H1: Assortative Mating and personality are linked to Social Dominance Orientation.

Prediction 1: People will prefer partners with similar Openness scores.

Prediction 2: Openness will be negatively correlated with partner SDO scores.

Prediction 3: People will prefer partners with similar SDO scores.

H2: Aspirational Assortative Mating applies to Social Dominance Orientation.

Prediction 4: People will prefer partners with higher SDO scores.

Method

Sample

Respondents were a convenience sample of students from various NTNU campuses in the city of Trondheim. 666 respondents completed a questionnaire. 637 of these respondents actively consented to have their data be used in research. Those that did not consent were excluded from the data used in this study. 437 of the respondents were women and 191 of the respondents were men. 8 respondents answered “Other/I identify neither as a man nor a woman”, and 1 respondent left the gender item blank. The age of the respondents ranged from 19-58, with a mean age of 22 ($SD = 3,915$).

Procedure

We visited lectures in person across the various NTNU campuses. In the lectures, we explained to the audience what the focus of the project was and presented a URL and a QR code with access to the online questionnaire. We explained that participation was anonymous and voluntary. Participants were informed that they would be offered to sign up for the drawing of 10 cinema gift cards by leaving their e-mail through a one-way link to a separate, untraceable survey at the end of the questionnaire. We also informed the audience that the project had been approved by the ethics committee at NTNU’s Department of Psychology.

Convenience sampling was the natural method to use, due to student involvement and a time-limited semester. Under advisement from the supervisors, the students involved with this project sorted themselves into groups comprised of both genders, to the extent that it was possible. The intention was to make both women and men more inclined to participate by having both male and female representatives present the study. NTNU’s online schedules were used, and we asked the lecturers for permission to recruit from their lectures. To achieve

the highest number of recruited respondents we could from both genders, we chose to prioritise lectures held in rooms with high seat numbers, and relevance to study programs assumed to be popular among men, to compensate for their lower willingness to participate. Aside from these two priorities, the lectures were randomly chosen. We did not exclusively visit these types of classes and did not investigate in advance to see how many men were really in them.

Instruments

The questionnaire was made up of two main components, one to describe the respondent and one to describe their ideal partner. 60 items measured the respondent's personality traits, with 12 items per trait. All trait facets were represented in the items, with 2 items per facet, as per the Big Five Model of personality (BFM). Additionally, 8 items measured the Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) of the respondents. These 68 items were then rephrased and repeated to measure the personality and SDO of their ideal partner. In addition to these 136 items measuring the personalities of the respondent and their ideal partner, 4 items for age, marital status, gender, and gender of ideal partner were included for descriptive use. Finally, 1 item asking for the respondent's consent to use their answers in our research concluded the questionnaire, for a total of 141 items, not counting the separate survey for the gift card draft.

The 60 personality items were based on the IPIP-NEO-60 inventory, which was developed to provide a free and shortened personality item pool for the BFM compared to previous, similar item pools (Maples-Keller et al., 2019, p. 5). The items were phrased as statements like "I know how to get things done". The respondent could choose to agree or disagree with these statements using a 5-point Likert scale. The point phrasings were

Norwegian equivalents of “Strongly disagree”, “Disagree”, “Neither agree nor disagree”, “Agree” and “Strongly agree”. The 8 Social Dominance Orientation items used a 7-point Likert scale. The point phrasing was the Norwegian equivalent of “Strongly disagree” for 1, “Strongly agree” for 7, and no statement for points 2-6.

The personality items of the questionnaire were used to construct five personality scales: Openness ($\alpha = 0.66$), Agreeableness ($\alpha = 0.74$), Conscientiousness ($\alpha = 0.76$), Neuroticism ($\alpha = 0.80$) and Extraversion ($\alpha = 0.83$) for the respondents themselves, and Openness ($\alpha = 0.68$), Agreeableness ($\alpha = 0.78$), Conscientiousness ($\alpha = 0.76$), Neuroticism ($\alpha = 0.76$) and Extraversion ($\alpha = 0.75$) for the respondents’ ideal partners. The social dominance items of the questionnaire were used to construct a single SDO scale for self ($\alpha = .81$) and partner ($\alpha = 0.81$).

Overall, the BFM and SDO scales for both the respondents and their ideal partners range from having acceptable or decent reliability at just under .70 alpha, to very good at above .80 alpha. All alphas, except Openness, range from .70 to above .80. Respondents and ideal partners have in common that their weakest and least reliable traits were Openness, with .66 and .68 respectively.

Some of the items were phrased positively in relation to the measured trait, and some were phrased negatively. For trait Conscientiousness, for example, one item read: “I know how to get things done”, and another item read: “I let my home stay messy”. For the personality items, 23 items out of 60 were negatively phrased like this. For the social dominance items, 4 out of 8 items were negatively phrased. The same items were negatively phrased for self and ideal partner. The items were asked in randomized orders for each respondent.

Data analysis

The data analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 29. A Pearson correlation analysis was performed on the personality items of the dataset. This was done to investigate the correlations between the personality trait scales of the respondents and those of their ideal partner, and to look for Assortative Mating in the sample. The Pearson correlation was chosen because we assume a linear relationship.

A second Pearson correlation analysis was performed on the SDO scores of the respondents and their ideal partners. The correlations between respondents' SDO scores and those of their ideal partners were found to investigate Assortative Mating or Similarity in SDO. The personality correlations between self and partner, first, and the SDO correlations between self and partner, second, are reported in separate tables for clarity. The SDO table also reports the Openness score for self, as those are relevant to the correlations with ideal partners' SDO.

A paired-samples t-test was performed on the BFM personality trait Openness for self and for ideal partner, as well as for SDO of self and SDO of ideal partner. The t-test was performed to look for disparities between self-scores and ideal partner scores in Openness and SDO, and thus to investigate the AMM in the sample. A paired-samples t-test was the natural choice because neither gender differences nor relationship status were the focus of this study, but rather a general investigation into BFM trait Openness, SDO, AM and AMM.

Results

Table 1 reports descriptive statistics about the measured personality traits of the respondents and those of their ideal partners. The table also reports correlations between all personality traits measured by the personality items of the questionnaire. Correlations

between respondent and partner traits are bolded and underlined to clarify importance to the thesis. The results showed strong, positive correlations between respondent and ideal partner's respective Openness, Agreeableness and Extraversion, a medium correlation between respective Conscientiousness, and a small correlation between respective Neuroticism (Cohen, 1992, p. 157). All correlations between respondent BFM traits and corresponding ideal partner BFM traits were significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics and correlations between BFM trait scores for self and ideal partner (N = 637)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Openness S	3.36	0.47	-									
2. Agreeableness S	3.94	0.45	.13**	-								
3. Conscientiousness S	3.68	0.47	-.05	.25**	-							
4. Extraversion S	3.40	0.59	.15**	.05	.19**	-						
5. Neuroticism S	2.84	0.58	-.05	-.04	-.31**	-.42**	-					
6. Openness P	3.45	0.41	<u>.56**</u>	.14**	-.12**	.05	-.01	-				
7. Agreeableness P	4.17	0.39	.12**	<u>.60**</u>	.19**	.08*	-.04	.27**	-			
8. Conscientiousness P	4.09	0.36	.01	.11**	<u>.35**</u>	.10**	-.06	.13**	.37**	-		
9. Extraversion P	2.92	0.41	.06	.14**	.07	<u>.51**</u>	-.11**	.20**	.18**	.27**	-	
10. Neuroticism P	2.09	0.41	-.04	-.17**	-.24**	-.17**	<u>.16**</u>	-.20**	-.41**	-.58**	-.41**	-

Note. Correlations between the respondents' traits (S) and ideal partner's traits (P) are in bold; Correlations between same traits are underlined; * = $p < .05$ ** = $p < .01$

Table 2 reports the correlations between the respondents' SDO scores and those of their ideal partners. Correlations between respondent's BFM traits and the SDO scores of their

ideal partners are also reported. Correlations between respondent and partner are underlined to clarify importance to the thesis. The results showed a very robust and significant correlation between the SDO scores of the respondents and the SDO scores of their ideal partners. The respondents' trait Openness showed a significant and moderate negative correlation with SDO scores of their ideal partners.

Table 2

Correlations between Openness for self and SDO scores for self and ideal partner (N = 637)

	1.	2.	3.
1. SDO (S)	-	-	-
2. SDO (P)	<u>.82**</u>	-	-
3. O (S)	-.34**	<u>-.33**</u>	-

Note. Correlations that have relevance to Hypothesis 1 and Predictions 2 and 3 are underlined;

** $p = < .01$

Table 3 reports mean differences between the respondent's trait scores and those of their ideal partner. Reported traits are Openness and SDO. Descriptive statistics for the traits are also included, including mean, standard deviation, and reliability of the measurements. The table shows the mean trait differences between respondents and ideal partners at $\Delta M = 0.10$, $t(637) = 5.65$ for Openness, and $\Delta M = 0.13$ $t(637) = 5.64$ for Social Dominance Orientation, respectively. Both differences were significant. The largest difference of the two was the difference between the respondents' self-reported SDO and the SDO of their ideal partner.

Table 3*Descriptive statistics for BFM, SDO and AAM preference, for self and ideal partner (N = 637)*

Trait	<u>Self</u>			<u>Ideal partner</u>			<u>Aspirational assortative m. preference</u>			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>α</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>α</i>	<i>M_d</i>	CI	<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>
O	3.36	0.48	.66	3.45	0.41	.68	0.10	[0.06, 0.13]	5.65***	0.42
SDO	2.79	1.01	.81	2.92	0.98	.81	0.13	[0.09, 0.18]	5.64***	0.59

Note. *M_d* (mean difference), CI (95% confidence interval for *M_d*), and *d* (Cohen's *d*) refer to the difference between BFM and SDO scores for the respondent compared to the BFM and SDO scores for the respondent's ideal partner; *** = $p < .001$

Discussion

The topic of the research project was personality and partner choice. The purpose of my study was to replicate findings regarding Assortative Mating, Similarity Theory and Aspirational Assortative Mating, as well as extend the application of Aspirational Assortative Mating to the personality dimension of Social Dominance Orientation.

Correlations between the respondent and their ideal partner were found for all five of the BFM personality traits. The correlations were all significant at the 0.01 level, and the effect sizes of the correlations corresponded to what one would expect based on the literature on AM. From this we can conclude, firstly, that our sample is probably representative, and that our questionnaire is reliable. Our data is therefore suitable for testing hypotheses 1 and 2, and their predictions regarding SDO, AM and AAM. Secondly, we can conclude that we have successfully found evidence for Assortative Mating and replicated previous findings.

The hypotheses and their respective predictions will be evaluated in turn. Firstly, there is **H1**: “Assortative Mating and Openness are linked to Social Dominance Orientation.” The results from the BFM personality correlation analysis for self and ideal partner confirmed that AM applies to our dataset. Significant and moderate correlations were found for all of the BFM personality traits. This includes the correlation between Openness for self and ideal partner. This confirms **Prediction 1**, that people prefer partners with similar Openness scores.

The results from the SDO correlation analysis presented three significant correlations at the 0.01 level: The respondents’ Openness correlates negatively with their own SDO scores. The respondents’ Openness also correlates negatively with their ideal partners’ SDO scores. The correlation between the respondents’ Openness and SDO was moderate. The correlation between the respondent’s Openness and the SDO of their ideal partner, was moderate. These findings are what one would expect, based on the fact that Openness has been known to correlate negatively with SDO. This confirms **Prediction 2**, that openness is negatively correlated with SDO. Furthermore, the respondent’s SDO shows a very strong, positive correlation with the SDO of their ideal partner. This confirms **Prediction 3**, that people prefer partners with similar SDO scores. Contemporary research consistently show results that support this finding. As established, the left-right dichotomy of the political spectrum aligns with the spectrum of Social Dominance Orientation (Ozer & Benet-Martínez, 2006, p. 413) and liberalism-conservatism has been shown to be one of the most desired similarities between partners (Watson et al., 2014, p. 122), due to Assortative Mating.

Predictions 1, 2 and 3 are all confirmed as expected. Based on this, **H1** is evaluated as correct. Openness is linked, and Assortative Mating applies, to Social Dominance Orientation.

Secondly, there is **H2**: “Aspirational Assortative Mating applies to Social Dominance Orientation.” This hypothesis was tested by investigating differences in Openness and Social Dominance Orientation. **Prediction 4** stated that people will prefer partners with higher SDO

scores than themselves. The results from the paired samples t-test showed that there were statistically significant differences, at the 0.001 level, between the respondents and their ideal partners in both trait Openness and Social Dominance Orientation. So, with regard to confirming or disconfirming the second hypothesis, the question becomes whether or not these differences are substantial. The mean difference in SDO between the respondent's self-reported score and their desired ideal partner score was 0.13 on the SDO scale and had a Cohen's d of 0.59. This is a medium-sized effect, which implies that there is a considerable difference between respondent SDO and ideal partner SDO. This implies that people want partners close to their own SDO, but higher in it, that people aspire upwards on Social Dominance Orientation. Based on the numbers and results, this confirms **Prediction 4**. People will prefer partners with higher SDO scores.

The sole prediction for **H2** has been confirmed. Therefore, based on the numbers, H2 is confirmed.

Strengths and limitations

There is a number of weaknesses in the present study. The hypotheses have both been confirmed. However, I found it difficult to evaluate the second hypothesis as confirmable, based on these results. A significant problem with the results regarding **H2** and **Prediction 4** on Aspirational Assortative Mating and Social Dominance Orientation, is the sample. 437 women and 191 men completed the questionnaire with research consent. With around 69% of the data collected being from women, and around 30% from men, not counting the approximately 1% of the respondents responding "other" or blank on the gender item, more than two thirds of the data sampled represent answers from women.

The issue with confirming **H2** based on data sample representing a two-third female majority, is that the hypothesis involves Social Dominance Orientation. SDO is a personality dimension which, on the high end of the spectrum, is empirically and theoretically linked to conservatism and tolerance of hierarchies. On the low end of the SDO spectrum, liberal political views are represented, along with low tolerance for hierarchies, and high support for egalitarianism. Men are known to be, on average, more conservative, and women more liberal. This is common knowledge. Furthermore, since BFM personality traits like Agreeableness and Openness are lower in men, on average, than women, it is expected that men will be higher in SDO, a gender-based difference known as the “invariance hypothesis” (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999, p. 49). And this is where the issue with the sample arises.

What this indicates, is that the female majority in the sample might influence the perceived Aspirational Assortative Mating for SDO in the results. Women might assort themselves toward potential partners with more masculine personality profiles. This might include a higher SDO, as found in the results. This study was not designed to investigate gender differences. A weakness in this study is therefore that there have not been taken steps to account for this in the investigation into AMM. This does not necessarily mean that the findings in SDO differences between respondents and ideal partners are entirely false. There might be an effect that has simply been skewed by the sample. It does however mean that the confirmation of **Prediction 4** and **H2** is questionable.

A second, related weakness to this study, is the sampling. The data collected through the questionnaire is, naturally, susceptible to self-report biases (Larsen & Buss, 2018, p. 24), such as inaccurate self-reflection or dishonesty. We were also not able to randomise the recruitment process, due to limits in time and resources. It is in the nature of research projects with student involvement that there are limited resources available, and this method of convenience sampling reflects that.

It is also worth noting that using university students for participants might give the sample somewhat higher trait Openness than what a random, representative sample would have. One of the facets of Openness is Intelligence, something people with curious and philosophical natures at university might be inclined to have to a greater degree. Another weakness in this study, is that personality traits were analysed as whole traits, and the facets, like Intelligence, were left subsumed under the traits in the data. This means no measures have been taken to factor the possibly higher Intelligence of university students into account. This could be problematic, as intelligence has been known to be a stronger contributor to Assortative Mating than personality in general (Escorial & Martín-Buro, 2012, p. 685). And while intelligence is valued by both men and women (Buss, 1989, p. 42), some studies have found small, but significant, differences in intelligence preferences between men and women, where women valued intelligence more (Walter et al., 2020, p. 416). This, again, might affect the Openness results on average, due to the sample, which in turn could affect SDO.

With regards to SDO, it is also worth pointing out that the nuance between SDO-D and SDO-E was not examined. While the questionnaire's 8 SDO questions might have been used to make the distinction, this was not the focus of this research project, or my study. This is an aspect of SDO that could have been measured, but was not prioritised, due to relevance.

Our questionnaire collected descriptive information about the respondents' relationship status. While respondents were instructed that they could participate regardless of whether they were single or not, one weakness in our data collection is that we do not know how their current relationship affects their answers on the ideal partner items. It is possible that being in a relationship while answering the questionnaire affects what ideals the respondents ascribe to the "ideal partner", whether consciously by comparison of ideal and current partner, or unconsciously through favouritism towards the current partner's personality (Eastwick et al., 2019, p. 170). It is also worth noting that we had no control over

how many respondents also had their partner participate in the questionnaire. There is a possibility that couples might do the questionnaire together as a relationship activity, influencing their respective answers. One possible result of such influence is an increased homogeneity in their answers, caused by one deferring to the other. Another possibility could be that they distract each other and take the questionnaire less seriously as a result, creating noise in the data.

At the same time, there are numerous strengths to this study. Despite the convenience sampling method, we achieved 666 respondents over the course of the month we had available to us, 637 of which consented to have their data be the basis for this study. For a student-administered survey, this is good sample compared to the often-cited gold standard of $N = 1000$. While the resulting relationship between for Aspirational Assortative Mating and SDO remains questionable due to gender imbalance, the risk of a Type I error due to insufficient data is negligible due to the sample size. A probable contributor to our recruitment success, is the incentive provided by the opportunity to sign up for the drawing of 10 cinema gift cards. In all likelihood, this was a very effective low-cost-high-reward financial investment that was put into the project beforehand by the project planners.

Other strengths of this study include its anonymity, a simple structure to the questionnaire and relatively simple questions. Apart from the possibility of some minor confusion stemming from the terminology, like the Norwegian translations of “Conscientiousness”, the items were phrased simply and understandably. The Likert point scales are also simple instruments for respondents to use. The study’s reliability and validity were also strengthened by the alternating positive and negative phrasings of the items, addressing the risk of respondents being affected by their perception of the questions.

Implications for future research

This study found the following: Assortative Mating was discovered in our sample across all Big Five personality traits, including trait Openness. This is a replication congruent with previous research on Assortative Mating and personality. Additionally, SDO was also found to be Assortative, even more so than the BFM personality dimensions. Openness was found to correlate negatively with SDO. And lastly, an Aspirational Assortative Mating difference was found between the respondent's SDO and that of their ideal partner. However, there is some uncertainty tied to this final finding.

There are some unanswered questions future research could address. One way to begin would be by improving on the current research design. Firstly, further research should control for the difference in personality preferences across the genders, in order to replicate the AMM finding with a greater degree of certainty. This might be done by separating the respondent data by gender and comparing the two sets of results. Alternatively, steps could be taken to ensure future samples have a more even gender distribution. Secondly, further research could shift the focus from being on AMM and SDO in general, over to gender differences in this relationship between AMM and SDO.

Additionally, future research should build on the current study by investigating more nuances of SDO. Firstly, these findings should be replicated with a higher degree of certainty. Secondly, one could then investigate Aspirational Assortative Mating in relation to the theoretically separate components of SDO, namely SDO-D for dominance and SDO-E for egalitarianism. Differences in AM and AMM in relation to SDO-D and SDO-E could potentially reveal insights into moral psychologies relating to social injustice, racism and other social issues.

Conclusion

This study has shown that Social Dominance Orientation is not exempt from Aspirational Assortative Mating. Personality is a quality that simultaneously unites people and sets them apart. Both ends of the political spectrum, and the spectrum of Social Dominance, are beneficial, and together they perform a balancing act in the psyche of the public. And because different personalities fill different roles in society, political or otherwise, understanding Aspirational Assortative Mating and Social Dominance Orientation is important. Further studies should investigate SDO and AMM in greater detail. Because while SDO affects society at a systemic level, the effects, working through AM and AMM, begin in the nuclear family, with the romantic couple. The social psychology of society has its end and its beginning in the psychology of the “Ideal Partner”.

Sammendrag

Denne studien har vist at Sosial dominansorientering ikke er unntatt fra «Aspirational Assortative Mating». Personlighet er en egenskap som samtidig forener mennesker og skiller dem fra hverandre. Begge ender av det politiske spekteret, og spekteret av Sosial dominansorientering, er nødvendige. Sammen balanserer de offentlighetens psyke. Og fordi forskjellige personligheter fyller forskjellige roller i samfunnet, både politisk ellers, er det viktig å forstå «Aspirational Assortative Mating» og Sosial dominansorientering. Videre studier burde undersøke SDO og AMM i større detalj, fordi selv om SDO påvirker samfunnet på et systemisk nivå, begynner effektene, gjennom AM og AMM, i kjernefamilien, hos det romantiske paret. Samfunnets sosiale psykologi har sin ende og sin begynnelse i psykologien til den "ideelle partneren".

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