Is there consistency over time in personality traits of an individual's romantic and sexual partners?

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Master's Thesis in Psychology

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# ÅBO AKADEMI UNIVERSITY – FACULTY OF ARTS, PSYCHOLOGY AND THEOLOGY

**Subject:** Psychology

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**Abstract:**
Mate choice is an evolutionary process in which the selection process depends on the attractiveness of the prospective partners phenotypic traits. The present study investigated whether previous and current romantic and sexual partners of the same individual tend to be more similar in terms of personality traits. In other words, we were interested in whether people have a certain "type" in partners, and if this "type" is consistent over time (when multiple partners are included). The sample consisted of 15 focus person groups, where the groups were formed by the partners of the same individual (N=44). To study similarity within a group an intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) was used, where the within group and between group variances were accounted for. The amount of clustering (i.e. the amount of variance accounted for by focus person) indicated how similar the partners of a focus person were. The only nominally significant personality trait was Sentimentality, with an ICC of 0.57 (57 % clustering) $p = .02$. No ICCs were significant after controlling for multiple comparisons. The results indicate that people do not have a set type when it comes to the personality traits of their partners. However, the sample in the present study was likely underpowered to detect clustering tendencies with smaller effect sizes, and it is therefore possible that clustering for personality could occur. We were also unable to test for gender differences, and it is possible that clustering effects could be more pronounced in women. Future research should focus recruiting larger samples with sufficient statistical power.

**Keywords:** Mate choice, personality, clustering, consistency

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**Avhandlingens titel:** Följdriktighet i partnerval: väljer vi partners enligt deras personlighet?

**Handledare:** Annika Gunst och Patrick Jern

**Abstrakt:**
Partnerval är en evolutionär process där attraktiviteten av egenskaperna hos potentiella partners styr själva valprocessen. I den föreliggande avhandlingen var målet att undersöka personers nuvarande och/eller före detta romantiska eller sexuella partners, och se om de är lika när det gäller personlighetsdrag. Med andra ord var intresset att se om människor föredrar en viss "typ" när de väljer partners, och att se om man väljer följdriktigt enligt denna "typ" (flera partners per fokusperson inkluderades). Samplet bestod av 15 grupper som bildades enligt fokusperson, och där gruppmedlemmarna var varje fokuspersons nuvarande/före detta partners (N= 44). För att forska hur lika medlemmarna i grupperna var, analyserades inomgrupps- och mellangrupps varianser med en intraklass korrelationskoefficient (ICC). Mängden klustring (d.v.s. hur mycket av variansen som förklaras av fokuspersonen) indikerade hur lika partnerna i en grupp var. Det enda nominellt signifikanta personlighetsdraget var sentimentalitet med ICC 0,57 (57 % klustring) p = .02. Inga resultat var signifikanta efter kontroll för multipla test. Resultaten indikerar att människor inte har preferenser för en viss "typ" när det kommer till deras partners personlighet. Samplet i den föreliggande avhandlingen var troligen för litet för att fånga upp klustring med små effektstorlekar. Därför är det möjligt att klustring för personlighet kunde finnas i verkligheten. Det kan också vara möjligt att klustring av personlighetsdrag syns mer tydligt i ett sampel av kvinnor, men jämförelsen mellan kön blev i detta fall omöjligt på grund av sampelstorleken. Framtida forskning kunde fokusera på rekryteringsprocessen för ett större sampel med högre statistisk styrka.

**Nyckelord:** Partnerval, personlighet, kluster, följdriktighet

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**INTRODUCTION**

Mate choice is an evolutionary process in which the selection process depends on the attractiveness of the prospective partner's phenotypic traits (Edward, 2015). The focus of the present study was whether previous and current romantic and sexual partners of the same individual tend to be similar in terms of their personality traits. The aim was to investigate if individuals show preference for certain personality types when choosing partners (i.e., so that an individual would show affinity for similar personalities in their partners). Previous studies on personality traits in mate choice have mainly focused on assortative mating, that is, whether a focus person (the person whose mate selection tendencies are studied) tends to choose a partner who has a personality type similar to his or her own (Berscheid et al., 1971; Buss & Barnes, 1986; Ellis & Kelley, 1999). In the present study, we instead focused on whether or not there is clustering in personality traits among the partners of a focus person. Clustering among a focus person's partners means that the partners of the focus person are more similar to one another than could be expected due to chance, and that the preference is quite unique for the focus person (e.g., clustering on extraversion would mean that a focus person has often chosen extravert people as partners; Eastwick et al., 2017). In other words, we are interested in whether people have a certain "type" in romantic and sexual partners.

**Mate Choice: Do we have "types?"**

Even though consensus about this topic has not been established, there seems to be agreement in popular science that people do have "types", that there are "laws of attraction" that guide us in the decision-making process. In online magazines, such as *Psychology Today*, *Time* and *Metro UK,* we see headlines such as: "Why do people have a type?" (Firestone, 2017), "Yes, You Really Do Have a 'Type,' Science Says" (Sifferlin, 2015) and "Why do we have 'types' and can we change who we go for?" (Biddall, 2017). The headlines are, however, a bit misleading. The article by Sifferlin (2015) refers to a scientific publication by Germine et al. (2015), which is based on individuals' preferences for certain facial features. The two other articles were not based on scientific evidence but on clinical expertise and were not able to confirm that having a "type" actually exists empirically.

The present study was essentially based on the study by Eastwick et al. (2017), who studied clustering among a focus person's partners. The results indicated that the partners of a person tend to cluster by appearance (e.g., attractiveness; Eastwick et al., 2017). The authors studied partner consistency (i.e., clustering among several partners of the same individual over time) based on facial similarity and found substantial clustering of partner qualities by focus person (e.g., a focus person's partners tend to be equally attractive). Attractiveness was measured using third-party ratings. In the study by Eastwick et al. (2017), the authors also compared the partners of a focus person by self-reported qualities such as intelligence and educational aspirations. While significant consistency was detected, these findings were largely explained by social homogamy (i.e., finding partners within a local pool, for example the same school where the students may have similar educational aspirations), and thus due to a passive mate selection process. Eastwick et al. (2017) also studied clustering from a different point of view: whether the partners of a focus person agree on the personal attributes of the focus person, in other words how positive they find the personal attributes of the focus person (personal attributes that were measured were romantic desirability, sexual satisfaction and positive versus negative qualities). In this case, no consistency was found. In conclusion, the study of Eastwick et al. (2017) suggests that people tend to prefer partners who are similar when it comes to appearance and some personal attributes such as intelligence and educational aspirations, but that attributes not related to appearance are most likely due to social homogamy.

**Personal attributes and mate choice.** Different personal attributes of the focus person and partners have been the focus of mate choice studies. Attractiveness has been one of the most central attributes of mate choice studies (Eastwick et al., 2011; Eastwick et al. 2017; Germine et al. 2015), but research has also concentrated on other aspects, such as how a person's attachment style (Chappell & Davis, 2005), and personality traits (Asendorpf et al., 2010; Back et al., 2010; Gyuris, Járai & Bereczkei, 2010; Simpson & Gangestad, 1992) affect who they prefer as partners. Chappell and Davis (2005) studied the attachment-security hypothesis and concluded that partners with secure attachment types were preferred over all insecure types. They also concluded some similarity effects among the different attachment types (e.g., the preoccupied and dismissive participant considered partners with the same attachment type as more secure). The study was based on hypothetical scenarios and not their own real-life experiences.

**Personality and mate choice.** In the present study, personality was the personal attribute of interest. Mate choice studies that also include personality traits have previously focused on, for instance, speed-dating formats, where the focus has been on an individual's popularity and choosiness (how picky individuals are when choosing mates) in a group (Asendorpf et al., 2011), or the reciprocity of mate choices (e.g., if people tend to choose partners who also choose them; Back, et al., 2010). These studies suggest that there are some personality traits in potential partners that have a larger effect on mate selection (e.g., extraversion and openness to experience). Gyuris, Járai and Bereczkei (2010) studied the resemblances of personality traits between a person's parents and his/her spouse and found a significant correlation in the attribute Conscientiousness between young men's wives and their mothers. The results suggest that parental models can shape our mate preferences when it comes to personality. Simpson and Gangestad (1992) on the other hand concluded that people with a more restricted sociosexual orientation more often prefer a partner who is responsible and loyal, whereas unrestricted people tend to prefer partners who are more socially visible and attractive.

One of the biggest topics of interest in mate choice studies is similarities among partners on different attributes (i.e. assortative mating, see e.g., Botwin, Buss & Backleford, 1997; Lykken & Tellegen, 1993; Robinson et al. 2017). Zietsch et al. (2012) found that similarities among couples are not due to relationship duration or convergence, but due to initial choice (i.e., that couples do not become more similar as the relationship progresses). Luo and Klohnen (2005) found that marital satisfaction and similar personalities between couples were positively associated. They also concluded that similarity is more important than complementarity when choosing a partner. However, another study on long-term relationships concluded that similarity on background, physical, perceptual and personal characteristics are important at the beginning of a relationship, but that the similarity between couples only brings modest benefits in the longer run (i.e., similarity does not equal marital satisfaction; George et al. 2015). Whether these effects are the same in mate choice of short-term relationships remains unclear. The structure of the study by Botwin, Buss and Shackelford (1997) overcomes the problem of long-term versus short-term mating preferences, since they included both committed and uncommitted couples. They studied couples of two different groups: dating couples and committed newlywed couples, and measured personality with self-report forms but also had the partners rate each other's personalities. Their conclusion was that personality plays a critical part in mate selection. Online

dating sites such as eHarmony and Match.com advertise that their compatibility tests as scientifically supported and highly accurate matchmaking programs, where personality matching, often relying on either similarity or complementarity between two people, is culturally considered a legitimate approach to mate selection (Houran & Lange, 2004). However, studies on matchmaking systems of online dating state that the sites usually lack scientific evidence and matchmaking could thus be considered questionable (Finkel et al., 2012; Houran & Lange, 2004). Yet online sites such as OKCupid advertise their programs and matchmaking algorithms as a legitimate way of determining if two people are compatible or not (Rudder, 2013, 0:30).

It is yet unknown whether clustering applies to personality traits of the partners of a focus person. Previous studies have largely focused on similarity effects and how attributes in the focus person affect whom they prefer, whereas the target of the present study is the personality traits of the partners of a focus person. Some studies, such as Chappell and Davis (2005), use potential partner scenarios and thus do not tell us how people actually choose partners in the real world. The predictive validity of ideal partners is according to Eastwick et al. (2014), not a straightforward prediction of the actual selection process. A meta-analysis on predictive validity of ideal partner preferences states that most mate selection studies rely on data from potential partner selections and cannot therefore predict mate selection in real life (Campbell & Stanton, 2014). Finkel et al. (2012) discuss how the algorithms are proven not to work as good indicators of the diversity of possible outcomes when meeting someone new. This is similar to mate preferences not being a good predictor for actual mate choices; we do not often choose according to how we think we choose (Eastwick et al., 2014). Studies like the present one about actual mate choices and consistency are therefore important in the field of psychology.

Previous studies have mainly focused on either short time intervals where the focus is mate choice at that time or on long-term relationships where the focus is solely on the present relationship, but not on the consistency of mate choice over time. The results do not confirm that a certain trait is important in the mate choice process every time when a partner selection is being made. Botwin, Buss and Shackelford (1997) got around the issue of short-term and long-term relationships by including both dating couples and committed couples in their study, but they did not measure whether an individual chooses the same traits in different partners over time, and thus did not confirm if people have a consistent "type" when it comes to partners.

**Assessing personality**

Personality is still one of the most central topics of modern psychology that began with a theoretical view of human nature where the idea is that all humans have the same basic instincts. Nowadays personality psychology is a practice where individual differences are studied (Buss & Penke, 2017). Traditionally, personality theories are divided into the behavioristic, where theorists describe personality as a sum of our behaviors that can be observed over a long period of time, and the more dynamic perspective, where personality is seen as a sum of biological dispositions, impulses, tendencies and instincts, but also tendencies that are acquired over the whole lifespan (Eysenck, 1970).

Because of the divide in theories and difficulty to decide which traits are the most important to study, a descriptive model has been widely used in the field of personality (John, Naumann & Soto, 2008). *The lexical hypothesis* is a classification theory in which personality can be divided into core dimensions that can be described in multiple languages with a single term. These core dimensions create a universally representative taxonomy for personality (Goldberg, 1993). In lexical studies, personality dimensions have been studied in several languages using self- or peer ratings (Ashton & Lee, 2001). A descriptive model of personality gives researchers the opportunity to study specified domains of personality rather than trying to make sense of the thousands of different unique traits of human beings (John, Naumann & Soto 2008).

One of the best-known models of personality is The Big Five (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Goldberg, 1993). The Big Five personality theory can be divided into five personality dimensions: Neuroticism, Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and Agreeableness. This taxonomy offers a broad and generalized view of a person's mental state, affective experiences and behavioral expression. Later research has suggested that, Honesty-humility, which is only partially represented in the Big Five constructs, should be added to the existing five constructs (Ashton & Lee, 2001). According to Ashton and Lee (2001), this modified six-factor model offers the most comprehensive framework for the understanding of personality. It is often used when the personality dimensions Honesty-Humility, Agreeableness and Emotionality are of specific interest. The two latter have some differences in content from their counterparts in the Big Five (Agreeableness and Neuroticism). Especially the domain Honesty-Humility is said to

be an important addition to personality assessment because it measures ethical and prosocial behavior which are not included in the Big Five (Ashton & Lee, 2005).

**Clustering and Stable factors**

As mentioned above, clustering means that a certain trait among the partners of a focus person is similar. The example was how extraversion (a personality trait) can cluster if the partners of a focus person have scored similarly on extraversion. However, if all partners of all the focus persons are alike on extraversion, no clustering appears (i.e., no focus person will have a unique type because there is no variance in the variable measuring extraversion in the population of partners). This means that having a "type" (i.e., clustering) can exist only if people differ (i.e., there is variance) in mate preferences.

Studies concerning partner clustering have been nearly nonexistent before the study conducted by Eastwick et al. (2017), where clustering was studied on three different dimensions (evolutionary psychology, the sociological field, and the field of close relationships) but with the same strategy for analysis, calculating how much the traits of the partners of each focus person correlate with each other. The research conducted by Eastwick et al. (2017) also demonstrated how detectable clustering can emerge even when the dataset for each focus person is small (e.g., if a focus person had data from only two partners). This was demonstrated in a separate simulation study.

**Active and passive stable factors.** Stable factors in mate choice are predictable and will exhibit clustering among the partners of a focus person. This means that the partners of the focus person will exhibit more similarities to one another than to other individuals in a random group, who have not been a partner of the same focus person. Examples of stable factors are attributes in the focus person, mate preferences, and consistent environments. A person might be an intelligent person (attributes in the focus person) who prefers intelligent people as partners (mate preferences), and who also lives in an environment near intelligent people (consistent environments; Eastwick et al.,2017). In the mate choice process, one may divide the stable processes into passive and active processes.

Passive stable processes are factors that may result in clustering, but which are not actively altered by the focus person (e.g. social homogamy; Belot & Francesconi, 2013; Eastwick et al., 2017; Feingold, 1988). Active stable processes include those that emerge when a focus person

evaluates or is being evaluated in partner choice processes. Mate preferences is an example of an active stable process. Mate preferences are the certain aspects a focus person is looking for in a partner, or in other words, what attributes a certain focus person prefers in partners (Buss & Barnes 1986). This could for example be the personality traits of a potential partner. If people do choose partners who are compatible with their mate preferences, and if there is variance in people's preferences, clustering should appear (Eastwick et al., 2017). In the present study, we are interested to see if certain personality traits in the partners of a focus person might be due to active stable factors, factors that are in one way or another conscious or unconscious choices of the focus person.

**Aims and hypotheses**

The aim of the present study was to investigate whether a person has a certain "type" in partners, so that a person's partners will exhibit clustering and similarity in terms of personality traits. By using data from actual partners of the focus persons, we hoped to provide insight into the actual real-life process of mate selection.

  **Hypothesis on personality traits and clustering.** Based on previous research (e.g., Eastwick et al., 2017) we hypothesized that there would be little or no clustering (i.e., that a focus person's partners will not show statistically significant similarity) in their personality traits.

**METHOD**

**Procedure**

The data used in the present study were collected with an online survey. Two different online surveys were used, one for the focus person (survey 1) and one for the partners of each focus person (survey 2). The focus person was instructed to choose at least two people they had had romantic/sexual relations with. To qualify for the study, all participants had to be 18 years or older, give informed consent, and complete the survey. Participation was completely anonymous.

  Recruitment of participants was done in two steps: we recruited focus persons who in turn recruited their partners themselves. Emails with information about survey 1 (for focus persons) were sent to university mailing lists, and information about survey 1 was also shared by the

research team on social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, and Reddit). Surveys 1 and 2 were active for four weeks during the time period 8/27/2018-9/23/2018. All partners of the same focus person used the same participation code to link the right partners to the same focus person. After giving written informed consent, constructing a participation code and filling in required data in survey 1, the focus persons were asked to contact their current and/or ex romantic partners for the research and send the link to survey 2 and their participation code to the partners. A romantic partner was defined as someone the focus person had had expressed interest in, but it did not necessarily mean that they had had sex with the person. For example, having been on a date with someone would qualify them as a romantic partner. A sexual partner was defined as someone the focus person had had some kind of sexual relations with (also including kissing) in accordance with Eastwick et al. (2017). To minimize bias, we mentioned that if possible, the focus person should not leave out partners who they perceived as different from the rest of the partners. However, the focus person was free to choose whom he/she contacted in light of the study, and informed that they could choose not to contact a previous partner if they did not want to. The focus person was asked to report the number of partners he/she contacted. The focus person was instructed that they could contact more partners even after completing the survey, as long as they sent the same participation code to each partner. They were also informed that they themselves could participate as a partner in the event of an old partner contacting them.

After receiving the link to survey 2, the partners were instructed to fill in the participation code they got from the focus person. This way the partners could be linked to the right focus person. Survey 2 consisted of several self-report questionnaires assessing the partners' personality traits and values and attitudes. The instruments included in survey 2 are described in more detail in the Instruments section.

**Ethical aspects**

The Board for Research Ethics at Åbo Akademi University gave a positive evaluation of the research plan describing the present study. The focus persons had to contact their partners themselves for the study. This was chosen as the recruitment method because it would ensure anonymity of the participants but also establish transparency about the aims of the study (i.e., no information was collected without the knowledge of the partners). Anonymity was ensured by using a participation code. Each focus person was instructed to come up with a code that they

would send to the partners they contacted. The code also made it possible for the research team to match the partners to the right focus person anonymously. Contacting an old partner could potentially trigger negative emotions. However, participation was completely voluntary for all involved, and focus persons were informed that they did not have to contact partners they were not comfortable contacting. Informed consent was obtained from all focus persons and partners.

**Sample**

The total amount of focus persons who opened the survey was 634. Of these, 226 filled in a participation code. From the 226 focus persons, 74 finished the survey. The initial number of partners who had started the survey was 92, of whom 16 did not fill in the participation code and were therefore excluded. Of the remaining 76 participants, 17 participants were excluded due to them being the sole partner of a focus person. All data that could not produce a clustering effect were discarded (e.g., if a focus person did not send the survey to more than one partner, or if fewer than two partners of a focus person answered the survey). An additional 12 were excluded because they had not completed the required questionnaire assessing personality traits (HEXACO-60; Ashton & Lee 2009). An additional three partners were excluded because they became the sole partner after excluding those with missing on the required data. The final number of partners was 44, and on a group level sorted by focus person there were 15 groups (each group consisted of one focus person and his/her partners). The inclusion and exclusion process is presented in Figure 1. The average number of partners per focus person was $M = 2.93$ ($SD = 1.22$, Range = 2-5). The demographics and characteristics of the sample are presented in Tables 1 and 2.
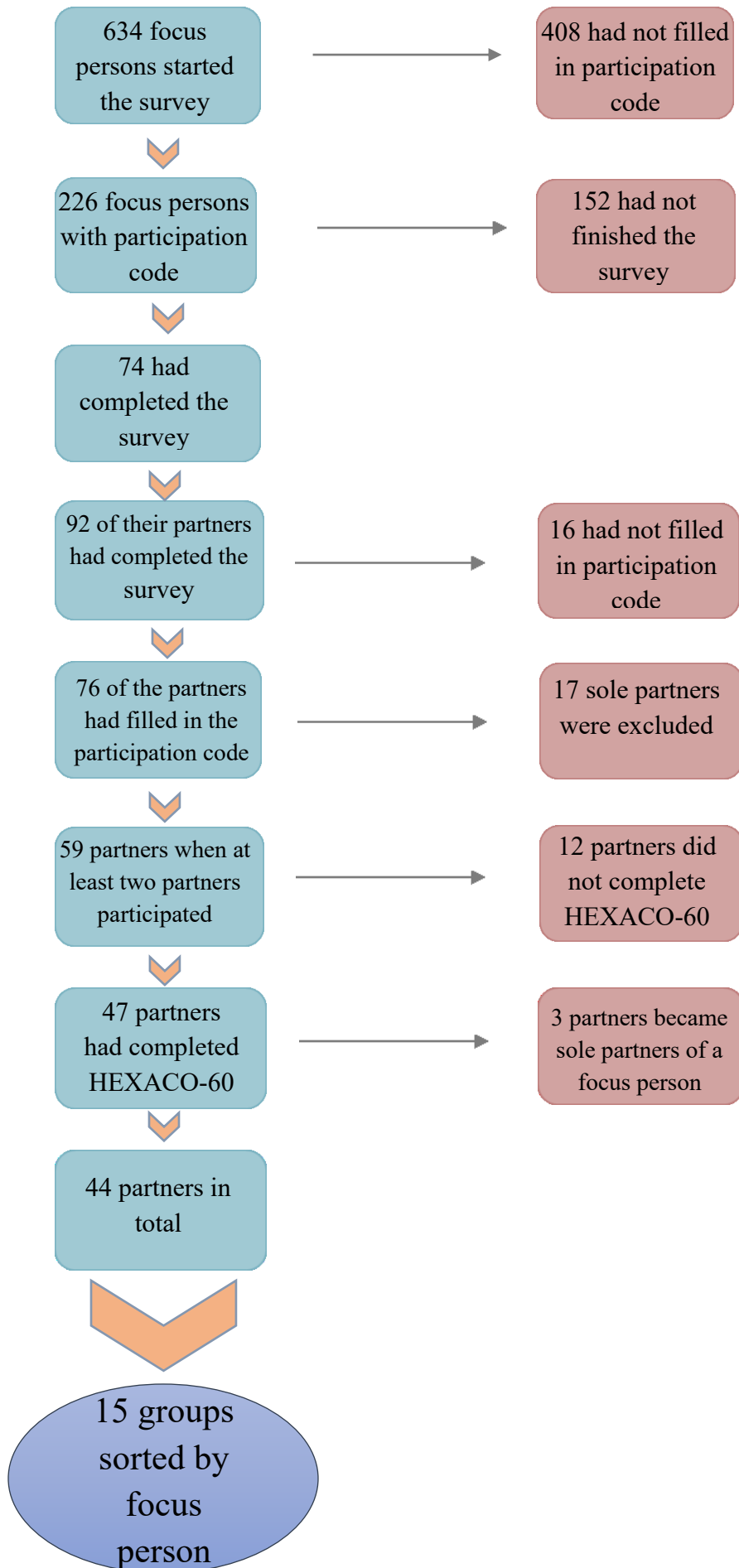
634 focus persons started the survey

408 had not filled in participation code

226 focus persons with participation code

152 had not finished the survey

74 had completed the survey

92 of their partners had completed the survey

16 had not filled in participation code

76 of the partners had filled in the participation code

17 sole partners were excluded

59 partners when at least two partners participated

12 partners did not complete HEXACO-60

47 partners had completed HEXACO-60

3 partners became sole partners of a focus person

44 partners in total

15 groups sorted by focus person

*Figure 1*. Flowchart of the inclusion (left side) and exclusion (right side) process. Focus person = the person whose partners are being studied. HEXACO-60 (Ashton & Lee, 2009) is a personality test and was the main instrument in the present study.

Table 1.
*Gender and sexuality of the partners (N=44)*

| Gender | Total (%) | Sexuality | Total (%) |
|--------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Male | 29 (65.9) | Heterosexual | 29 (88.6) |
| Female | 13 (29.5) | Homosexual | 0 (0) |
| Other | 2 (4.5) | Bisexual | 4 (9.1) |
| | | Other | 1 (2.3) |

*Note*: Sexuality other (n=1) defined themselves as pansexual

Table 2.
*Gender of the focuspersons (N=15)*

| Gender | Total (%) |
|--------|-----------|
| Male | 4 (26.7) |
| Female | 10 (66.7) |
| Other | 1 (6.7) |

**Measures**

Survey 1 for the focus persons consisted of questions inquiring about gender and citizenship. No further personal information was inquired. Survey 1 also included further instructions on how to construct the participation code and how to proceed with contacting partners. Survey 2 for partners consisted of questionnaires assessing the personality traits, values and attitudes of the partners. In the present study, however, only the test measuring personality traits was used. The partners were also asked to fill out some personal information that included gender, citizenship, sexual orientation and their weight and height.

The partners' personality traits were assessed with the shorter version of HEXACO Personality inventory (HEXACO-60; Ashton & Lee, 2009) that includes 60 questions out of the 100 questions from the longer version. The shorter version was selected in order to keep the

survey shorter (to avoid dropouts). The data collection was part of a larger study on clustering, also inquiring about the values and attitudes of the partners, outside the scope of the present study. The HEXACO assesses six personality dimensions that form the following domain-level scales: Honesty-Humility, Emotionality, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness and Openness to Experience. The domain-level scales can further be divided into facet-level scales with four sub-dimensions in each domain. Each domain-level scale has 10 questions (Appendix).

The 60 items are scored on a Likert-type scale. The range of item scores is 1-5, with the anchors 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. The internal consistency of HEXACO-60 has been found to be acceptable or good (with Cronbach's alphas ranging from .7 to .8, see Lee & Ashton, 2009). The facet-scales consisting of 60 items are intended and recommended as indicators of the HEXACO personality factors. The domain-level scales and their divisions into face-level scales, and score anchors as described by Lee and Ashton (2009) in HEXACO are presented in Table 3.

Table 3.

*HEXACO-60 Personality Dimensions, Sub-Dimensions and Interpretation of High Scores and Low Scores*

| Domain-level scales | Facet-level scales | High scores | Low scores |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Honesty-Humility | Sincerity, Fairness, Greed-avoidance, Modesty | Avoids manipulation of others, feels little temptation of breaking rules, uninterested in lavish wealth and luxury, feels no entitlement to elevated social status | Will flatter others to get what they want, inclined to break rules for personal profit, motivated by material gain, feels a strong sense of self-importance |
| 2. Emotionality | Fearfulness, Anxiety, Dependence, Sentimentality | Fear of physical dangers, experiences anxiety in response to life's stresses, feels a need for emotional support from others, and feels empathy and sentimental attachments with others | Not deterred by the prospect of physical harm, feels little worry even in stressful situations, has little need to share their concerns with others, and feels emotionally detached from others |

| 3. Extraversion | Social Self-Esteem, Social boldness, Sociability, Liveliness | Feels positively about themselves, feels confident when leading or addressing groups of people, enjoys social gatherings and interactions, and experiences positive feelings of enthusiasm and energy | Considers themselves unpopular, feels awkward when they are the center of social attention, are indifferent to social activities, and feels less lively and optimistic than others do |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 4. Agreeableness | Forgiveness, Gentleness, Flexibility, Patience | Forgives the wrongs that they suffered, are lenient in judging others, are willing to compromise and cooperate with others, and can easily control their temper | Holds grudges against those who have harmed them, are rather critical of others' shortcomings, are stubborn in defending their point of view, and feels anger readily in response to mistreatment |
| 5. Conscientiousness | Organization, Diligence Perfectionism, Prudence | Organizes their time and their physical surroundings, works in a disciplined way toward their goals, strive for accuracy and perfection in their tasks, and deliberates carefully when making decisions | Tends to be unconcerned with orderly surroundings or schedules, avoids difficult tasks or challenging goals, are satisfied with work that contains some errors, and makes decisions on impulse or with little reflection |
| 6. Openness to Experience | Aesthetic Appreciation, Inquisitiveness, Creativity, Unconventionality | Becomes absorbed in the beauty of art and nature, are inquisitive about various domains of knowledge, uses their imagination freely in everyday life, and | Rather unimpressed by most works of art, feels little intellectual curiosity, avoids creative pursuits, and feels little attraction toward ideas that may seem radical or |

|  | takes an interest in unusual ideas or people | unconventional |

*Note.* Score anchors as described by Lee and Ashton (2009).


**Statistical analyses**

The statistical analyses were performed using R 3.5.1 packages *lme4* (Bates, Maechler, Bolker & Walker, 2015), *Matrix* (Bates, Maechler, Davis, Oehlschlägel, Riedy, 2018), and *lmerTest* (Kuznetsova, Brockhoff, & Christensen, 2017). The package *lme4* is used to fit linear and generalized linear mixed-effect models, the package *Matrix* organizes the data by creating a matrix from the given set of values and finally the package *lmerTest* provides p-values for one, two or three type anova. A multilevel linear mixed model was used, where partners in each focus group were used as the level one hierarchical group, and groups by focus persons were used as level two. Random variance estimates were calculated for both the within-group and between-group variances. Intraclass Correlations (ICCs) for each group were calculated. ICCs are used when measurements are made on units that are organized into groups (here, the focus person determines the groups). The ICC shows how similar units (here: partners) in the same group are to each other. ICC was used to calculate how much the personality traits of the partners of each focus person correlate with each other. The ICC for each trait (6 domain level traits and 25 facet level traits) were calculated separately. The ICC can have a value between 0 and 1, if the value is 1 this would mean that clustering in a group is total. The interpretation of clustering in this case, however, is not this simple. The ICC is an estimate of group belonging, but also accounts for the between-group variance. The ICC is therefore dependent on the variance between groups. This means that clustering appears if the variance within a group is smaller than the variance between groups. If all groups are alike, no clustering appears (i.e., the focus persons cannot have a type).

The ICC can be interpreted as small but meaningful if it reaches at least .10, medium-sixed or moderate when it reaches .20 and relatively large when it reaches .30 (Gignac & Szodorai, 2016; Eastwick et al., 2017). If, for example, the ICC for extraversion reaches.30, this would mean that 30% of the variance could be attributable to the focus person on this trait (i.e. that the trait clusters by 30%).

Eastwick et al. (2017) showed in their simulation study how calculating the ICC's for each focus persons' partner remain at least medium-sized even when only two partners were selected. They used an agent-based prototype where they studied a model where people select mates based on their preferences (no bias) and concluded that even a small number, for example two partners, gives at least a medium-sized (.20) ICC. The ICC remained medium-sized also when the number of attributes increased.

We further tested our hypothesis (that the variance is not explained by a focus person, i.e., the null hypothesis) with an F-test. To weigh the strength of our effect we computed the $p$-value of significance, where $p$ was considered significant if it was lower than 0.05. To control for multiple comparisons, a Bonferroni adjusted $p$ value was calculated for the domain-level scales (0.05 / 6) and for the facet-level scales (0.05 / 25). The Bonferroni adjusted alpha levels for significance were thus .008 for the domain-level scales and .002 for the facet-level scales.

## RESULTS

Descriptives of the domain-level scores of our sample for all genders are presented in Table 4. The scores in our sample of the domain level scales correspond to those reported from a larger sample ($N = 1126$) collected by Lee and Ashton (2009).

Table 4.
*Descriptives on partner results in HEXACO-60 Domain Level Scales*

| HEXACO Domain | M (SD) | Range |
|---|---|---|
| Honesty-Humility | 3.36 (0.51) | 2.30-4.30 |
| Emotionality | 2.9 (0.73) | 1.7-4.70 |
| Extraversion | 3.35 (0.59) | 2.20-4.50 |
| Agreeableness | 3.2 (0.62) | 2.10-4.30 |
| Conscientiousness | 3.47 (0.66) | 1.90-4.90 |
| Openness to experience | 3.58 (0.64) | 2.40-4.70 |

*Note.* Range is the lowest and highest score in the data set. (N=44).

Table 5 presents ICCs, F-values and their corresponding *p* values for each domain-level and facet-level trait of the HEXACO-60 by focus person groupings. The ICC value also represents how much of the variance in said variable is attributable to each focus person. In the analyses, the ICCs ranged from zero to .57. The only trait on the domain level scale that reached the meaningful threshold of ICC .10 was Emotionality (.28), however no correlations reached statistical significance (all *p*s >.05). On the facet level, the traits that reached the minimum threshold were Fearfulness (.10), Anxiety (.11), Sentimentality (.57), Social boldness (.10), Sociability (.25), Flexibility (.22) and Unconventionality (.24). However, the only trait that had a nominally significant ICC was Sentimentality (*p* = .02). No ICCs at either domain or facet level remained significant after controlling for multiple comparisons.

Table 5

*Percentage of Variance in Partner Personality Traits Accounted for by Focus Person*

| Domain level scales of HEXACO-60 | ICC (% of the variance attributable to focus person) | F-value (14, 29) | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Honesty-Humility | .00 (0%) | 1 | .47 |
| Emotionality | .28 (28%) | 1.38 | .22 |
| Extraversion | .00 (0%) | 1 | .47 |
| Agreeableness | .00 (0%) | 1 | .47 |
| Conscientiousness | .00 (0%) | 1 | .47 |
| Openness to experience | .00 (0%) | 1 | .47 |
| **Facet level scales of HEXACO-60** | **ICC (% of the variance attributable to focus person)** | **F-value (14, 29)** | ***p*** |
| Sincerity | .00 (0%) | 1 | .47 |
| Fairness | .00 (0%) | 1 | .47 |
| Greed avoidance | .07 (7%) | 1.07 | .42 |
| Modesty | .00 (0%) | 1 | .47 |
| Fearfulness | .1 (10%) | 1.11 | .39 |
| Anxiety | .11 (11%) | 1.12 | .38 |
| Dependence | .00 (0%) | 1 | .47 |
| **Sentimentality** | **.57 (57%)** | **2.32** | **.02** |
| Social self-esteem | .00 (0%) | 1 | .47 |
| Social boldness | .1 (10%) | 1.11 | .39 |
| Sociability | .25 (25%) | 1.33 | .24 |
| Liveliness | .00 (0%) | 1 | .47 |
| Forgiveness | .00 (0%) | 1 | .47 |
| Gentleness | .04 (4%) | 1.04 | .44 |
| Flexibility | .22 (22%) | 1.28 | .27 |
| Patience | .00 (0%) | 1 | .47 |
| Organization | .07 (7%) | 1.07 | .42 |
| Diligence | .00 (0%) | 1 | .47 |
| Perfectionism | .04 (4%) | 1.04 | .44 |
| Prudence | .00 (0%) | 1 | .47 |
| Aesthetic appreciation | .00 (0%) | 1 | .47 |
| Inquisitiveness | .00 (0%) | 1 | .47 |
| Creativity | .00 (0%) | 1 | .47 |
| Unconventionality | .24 (24%) | 1.31 | .26 |

*Note*. ICC = Intraclass correlation. Items with bolded loadings were significant at $p<.05$. Degrees of freedom were the same for all calculations. The domain level scales are the six main personality traits of HEXACO-60. The facet level scales are sub-domains of the domain level scales. The third column of data presents the level of significance (*p*) for each trait.

**Clustering**

The groups by focus person are presented in Table 6. Figure 2 illustrates the effect of clustering.

Table 6.
*Partners (N=44) sorted in groups by focus person (N=15).*

| Group | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | 5 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 2 |

*Note.* N= number of partners in the groups.
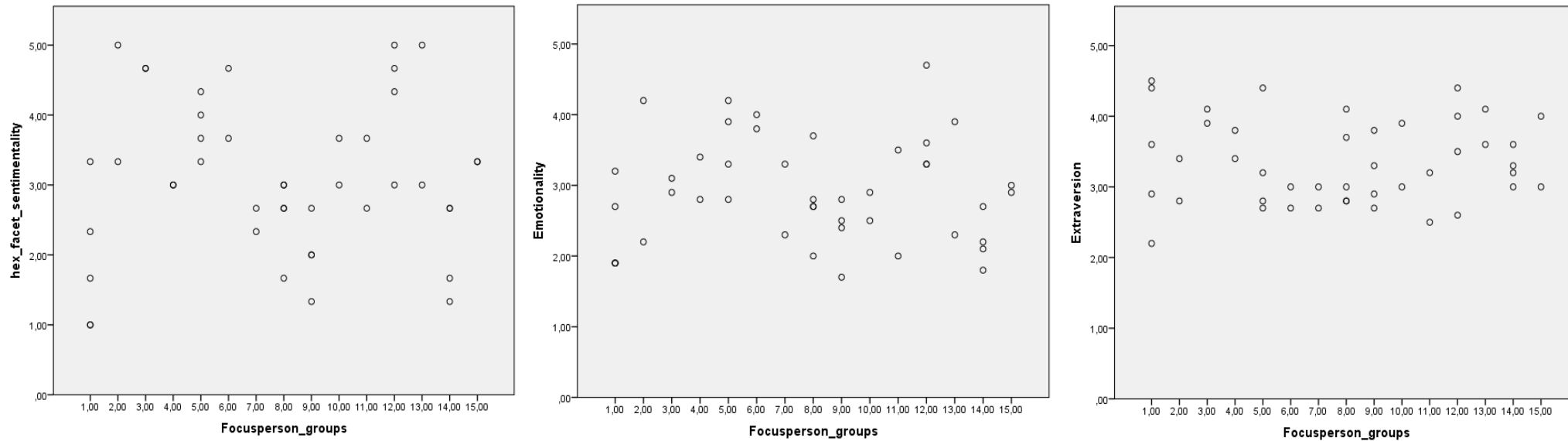
*Figure 2*. Example of three scatterplots representing different levels of clustering (strong/moderate/no clustering). The first scatterplot with Sentimentality represents strong clustering (57%), the second scatterplot with Emotionality represents moderate clustering (28%), and the third scatterplot with Extraversion represents no clustering (0%). The Y-axis represents a trait and the X-axis plots different focus person groups. Some partners have scored exactly alike and are represented with only one dot in the graph (e.g., both partners of focus person 15 had a score of 3.33 on the Sentimentality dimension and are therefore represented by only one dot). Clustering can be detected by the scattering of the scores. This means that scores of one group, for example group 13 in the first scatterplot from the left, are close to each other, but the scores between the different groups are scattered on a wide range on the plot. Comparing to Extraversion (which exhibits no clustering) we can see that all the groups have their scores in same area of the plot. This means that focus persons all prefer partners who are more or less equally extravert, and thus the trait will not cluster. If participants in the sample all choose similarly on a trait, no clustering will be visible.

**DISCUSSION**

The aim of the present study was to investigate whether previous and current romantic and sexual partners of the same individual tend to be more similar than expected by random chance in terms of personality traits. The aim was to estimate people's partner preferences for different personality traits over time including multiple partners. According to the study by Eastwick et al., (2017) where the detected clustering was largely due to social homogamy, we hypothesized that there would be little or no clustering (i.e., that a focus person's partners will not show statistically significant similarity) in their personality traits. The present study opens up an interesting format for future studies when the focus is consistency in mate preferences.

**General Discussion**

**Main finding and interpretation.** Our main finding was that, in our sample, it seems that the partners of a focus person were not particularly similar in terms of their personality traits. Emotionality was the only domain-level trait that had a non-zero ICC for clustering, however, this ICC was not significant. Of the 24 facet-level traits, only 11 had non-zero ICCs and of these, only one trait, Sentimentality, had a nominally significant ICC (at $p = .02$). No ICCs were significant after controlling for multiple comparisons. Emotionality clustered on a moderate level and out of the 11 facet level traits only seven (Fearfulness, Anxiety, Sentimentality, Social boldness, Sociability, Flexibility and Unconventionality) clustered on a moderate to strong level. The results confirm our hypothesis that the participants in our study do not have a preference for any particular personality type when choosing partners. The low level of significance in our analyses can be explained by the small sample size. However, it is conceivable that a number of robust clustering effects could have been detected had the sample been better powered. If these results represented significant clustering in a bigger sample, this could indicate that people have different preferences in how sentimental their partners are (some may prefer partners who for example are more governed by their feelings rather that reason or thought). It is important to note the Bonferroni correction might be too rigid in the present study because it automatically makes the assumption that none of the factors are related.

**Gender differences.** It is possible that clustering effects based on personality could be more pronounced in a sample consisting solely of women. Studies regarding gender differences in mate choice state that men and women have quite different partner preferences (Conroy-Beam & Buss, 2016; Landolt, Lalumiere, & Quinsey, 1995; Miller & Todd 1998) because of our differed level of investment in offspring (Trivers, 1972) (with women being the higher-investing sex). Males would be more interested in external, observable traits in females in the early stages of partner selection. Women, however, would have to rely more on cues that have a probabilistic nature: how much time and effort is he willing to sacrifice for our offspring? Expressions of love and kindness have been suggested as observable traits women might be looking for when choosing a male partner, in addition to social status and resources (Buss, 1992). Women are also shown to be attracted to men with "darker" personalities (often referred to as malevolent personality qualities, such as aggressive and self-promoting behavior; Paulhus & Williams, 2002), but typically this is restricted to short-term partners (Carter, Campbell & Muncer, 2014). Aggression and social dominance, typically considered behaviors that are more pronounced in men, are hypothesized as ways of securing resources from others and being able to defend against attacks (Buss & Shackelford, 1997; Hawley, 1999). According to evolutionary theory, some personality traits could play a bigger role (i.e., should cluster to a higher degree) when women choose partners because of their varying mate choice strategies. If all women would prefer partners who are socially dominant, no clustering would appear, but because women have also been shown to prefer kind and loving partners, clustering in a sample of women could be more pronounced.

Evolutionary psychologists also discuss the fact that partner choice strategies vary when one is looking for a short-term versus a long-term partner (Buss, 1992). Men are, for example, more inclined to show a mixed reproductive strategy when it comes to finding a long-term partner (Geary, Vigil, & Byrd-Craven, 2004). It is important to note that the theories described in evolutionary psychology and mate choice are only one perspective on human mating, a phenomenon that has been studied by many different schools of science, and that evolutionary theories are based on opposite sex attraction and are thus heteronormative (Crane-Seeber & Crane, 2010). Evolutionary theory should not be considered the only explanation but rather a part of explaining human sexuality together with cultural and experiential influences, and how they interact with development in society (Geary, Vigil & Byrd-Craven, 2004).

**Clustering.** The results in the present study do not discard the idea of clustering in mate choice altogether. Variables such as attractiveness have, for example, resulted in significant clustering in previous studies (Eastwick et al., 2017), and other variables, such as values, attitudes and socioeconomic status, could have a more central place in mate choice, especially at the beginning of a relationship (Luo & Klohnen, 2005). Luo and Klohnen (2005) discuss the fact that at the beginning of a relationship, the values, attitudes and beliefs of a potential partner may play a bigger role than personality but that once people are in a committed relationship the personality of one's partner may play a bigger role in marital happiness.

**Selection bias and having a "type".** Because the participants in the present study did not have to contact people whom they were uncomfortable getting in touch with, it might have led to the sample consisting of partners who are more easily approachable (and perhaps therefore more similar to one another in certain personality traits such as Agreeableness or Extraversion). However, finding clustering (or not finding clustering) in a more homogenous sample could give stronger evidence because clustering only appears if people have different "types". This means that having a "type" exists only if people differ in mate preferences. If the sample were homogenous and the results were that personality traits cluster, it would be quite strong evidence that people have individual "types". Consider this from the opposite direction: if the sample is heterogeneous and we find clustering, this might indicate that people have "types", but it might also just be a reflection of the sample being so heterogeneous. This means that finding clustering, or in this case no clustering, in a more homogenous sample gives stronger evidence because clustering only appears if people differ in their preferences.

Some personality traits might be more universally appreciated, thus making the detection of clustering more difficult. In the present study, for example, the scatter plot for Extraversion (Figure 2) shows that all focus persons had chosen quite similarly (all the partners are scattered in the same upper area of the plot, which would indicate that the focus persons in our sample all prefer partners who are slightly more extravert than introvert). Universally appreciated traits could be considered *passive stable factors*, since they are not directly an individual's own mate preferences, and are affected by the attitudes of the environment s/he lives in.

**Mate value affects mate choice.** Mate value of the focus person could also affect the amount of clustering. The term "mate choice" is sometimes misleading because not all of us have the luxury to just choose a partner we might desire. As Eastwick et al. (2017) wrote in their

manuscript, "The people with whom we *could* form relationships might differ from the people with whom we *do* from relationships [...]" (Eastwick et al., 2017, p. 839). Mate value is considered an indicator of who we "choose" as mates, and people with a higher mate value have a "larger pool" to pick from, whereas people with a lower mate value might have to "settle" for someone who sometimes does not meet their mate preferences (Ellis & Kelley, 1999; Eastwick et al., 2017). This leads to the question, if people do have "types", are we always able to choose partners according to our type? Information about the mate value of the chooser (the focus person), could offer an interesting comparison between participants whose partners cluster and participants whose partners do not cluster. In other words, we might observe a higher degree of clustering in a sample of focus persons selected for high mate value.

### Strengths and limitations of the study

The personality traits of multiple partners of one focus person have not been studied before, and the method of collecting information in the present study offers a new approach for future mate selection studies. However, recruiting participants in two steps (recruiting focus persons who then in their turn recruited their own partners), had its limitations.

The biggest limitation was the small sample size. The format of the present study was time efficient and the aims were transparent for the participants. However, the recruitment process that was done in two steps resulted in a low sample size (N = 15 focus persons, 44 partners). It is important to note that the power of the present study can be discussed from two aspects: the total amount of participants, but also the amount of partners for each focus person. This means that even if we had a sample of 1000 focus persons, the power of the results of clustering would still not be strong if the groups consist of only two people. This means that the more partners each focus person has, the better results. However, Eastwick et al. (2017) demonstrated how medium-sized clustering can emerge even when the dataset for each focus person is small (2-4 partners). In the present study, the average number of partners was 2.93. However, for this effect to be accurate a large sample is essential. Even though the sample size was low in the present study, the descriptive statistics of the domain level scales in the present sample corresponded to those in a study with a larger sample size (Lee & Ashton 2009).

It is difficult to study clustering when the attempt is to study a focus person's multiple partners due to external circumstances (i.e., how to get all the partners of a focus person to

answer a survey). In the present study, the focus person provided the link to the survey for partners themselves. The large number of dropouts can be partly explained by the recruitment method, but also because the inclusion of a partner was dependent on at least one other partner of a focus person answering the survey. This meant that if a focus person had recruited two partners, but only one of them answered the survey, the whole focus person group was excluded. It is also possible that some individuals might have been reluctant to contact former partners if, for example, they had not broken up amicably, which arguably reduces the generalizability of our results. However, in some facets our results did show some clustering, and could thus offer an interesting research model for future research. Moreover, most of the participants reported that they are heterosexual, which could possibly limit the generalizability of the results.

Because of the small sample size, the comparison of differences in mate choice between men and women was not possible. This may have offered an interesting point of view on our research question, had the sample size been larger and the comparison of two different groups been possible. With the focus person sample size of 15, analyses by gender were not possible (of all focus persons in the present study, four were men, 11 were women, and one person chose the response option "other").

The focus persons may also only have contacted partners they were comfortable contacting, thus leaving out important information of how or who they choose as partners and leading to a selection bias and to a more homogenous sample. However, the finding in the present study, that partners are mostly dissimilar in terms of their personalities, suggests that people do not have a certain "type" when it comes to choosing a partner. As discussed above, finding clustering, or no clustering, in a more homogenous sample gives stronger evidence because clustering only appears if people differ in their preferences.

We did not differentiate between short-term and long-term relationships. Eastwick et al. (2017) concluded that the effect on each attribute they studied did not change significantly when they controlled for long-term relationships (meaning the duration of the relationship did not affect if there was clustering or not in the attributes, they studied). Personality traits are not as easily detected in the beginning of a relationship and may emerge only as the relationship progresses (Luo & Klohnen, 2005). In the present study, however, we focused on the partner selection process that takes place in the beginning of a relationship. It is unclear how long it

would reasonably take a person to become intimately familiar with a partner's personality, and therefore how important personality is at the stage when an intimate relationship is initiated.

**Conclusions**

The aim of this study was to investigate if people have "types" in partners, and more specifically, if people tend to choose partners who are similar to each other when it comes to their personality. We found that there appears to be some tendency towards clustering (i.e., in terms of non-zero correlations of some personality domains and facets between different former and current partners of the same individual), but these were generally not statistically significant. Therefore, the results of the present study should be interpreted so that we did not find evidence for the notion that people have individual preferences for a particular "type" of personality. However, our sample was likely underpowered to detect clustering tendencies with smaller effect sizes, and it is therefore possible that clustering for personality could occur. We were also unable to test for gender differences, and it is possible that clustering effects could be more pronounced in women. Future research should focus recruiting larger samples with sufficient statistical power.

**Swedish Summary**

**Följdriktighet i partnerval: väljer vi partners enligt deras personlighet?**

## Inledning

Partnerval är en evolutionär process där attraktiviteten av egenskaperna hos potentiella partners styr själva valprocessen (Edward, 2015). I den föreliggande avhandlingen är målet att undersöka personers nuvarande och/eller före detta romantiska eller sexuella partners, och se om de är lika när det gäller personlighetsdrag. Målet är att se om personlighet hos potentiella partners styr partnerval. Tidigare studier om partnerval har i stort sett fokuserat på likheter hos partners, det vill säga om vi väljer partners som är lika oss själva (Berscheid m.fl., 1971; Buss & Barnes, 1986; Ellis & Kelley, 1999). I den föreliggande avhandlingen ligger fokuset på klustring av personlighetsdrag. Klustring av personlighetsdrag innebär att en och samma persons partners är mer lika varandra än vad som kunde beräknas enligt chans. Klustring av personlighetsdraget extraversion skulle då innebära att en person oftast valt partners som är extraverta (Eastwick m.fl. 2017). Med andra ord är målet att se om vi föredrar en viss "typ" när det gäller partners.

Det verkar råda en överensstämmelse bland populärvetenskapliga artiklar att vi föredrar en viss "typ", och att vi väljer partners enligt denna typ (Biddall, 2017; Firestone, 2017; Sifferlin, 2015). Eastwick m.fl. (2017) var de första att studera detta koncept, där upplägget innehöll bland annat attraktivitet och intelligens som avgörande faktorer för partnerval. Resultaterna visade att folk har en viss typ när det gäller utseende, men när det gäller intelligens har miljön en större påverkan på valet. Detta innebär att vi oftast väljer partners ur den miljö som är tillgänglig, och därför är också våra partners lika varandra (Belot & Francesconi, 2013; Eastwick m.fl., 2017; Feingold, 1988). Miljöns påverkan på partnerval är en passiv faktor som påverkar partnerval. I den föreliggande avhandlingen är målet att studera aktiva faktorer som påverkar partnerval. En aktiv faktor är något som vi själva medvetet eller omedvetet påverkas av när vi väljer partners. Preferenser för en viss sorts drag hos en partner, exempelvis preferens för personer som är extraverta, är ett exempel av en aktiv faktor.

Klustring syns bara då fokuspersoner väljer olika (fokuspersoner är de personer vars partners studeras). Ifall alla fokuspersoner väljer lika, har ingen en individuell "typ" när det

gäller partnerval. Detta innebär att konceptet att ha en "typ" existerar bara när preferenserna hos fokuspersoner skiljer sig åt. Klustring är således beroende av variansen inom gruppen (mellan en fokuspersons alla partners), samt variansen mellan grupperna (mellan alla grupper som bildas enligt fokusperson).

Eastwick m.fl. (2017) studerade också följdriktighet i val av partner. Detta innebär att man studerar en och samma persons flera partners. Tidigare studier inom fältet har inte studerat följdriktighet, utan har i stort sett fokuserat på likheter hos par (Botwin, Buss & Backleford, 1997; Lykken & Tellegen, 1993; Robinson m.fl. 2017). Detta innebär att vi inte kan påstå att människor väljer likadant varje gång de väljer en ny partner, utan bara undersöka hur de valt när det gäller en viss partner. Eastwick m.fl. (2017) menar att till och med ett så lågt antal som två partners ger ett estimat av medelmåttig styrka när det gäller följdriktighet i partnerval.

Personlighet är ett omstritt ämne inom psykologin, och man har genom tiderna försökt hitta sätt att studera universella personlighetsdrag som inte är bundna till kultur eller i situationen (John, Naumann & Soto, 2008; Goldberg, 1993). Detta har lett till bland annat femfaktorteorin, som är ett av de mest kända klassifikationssystemen av personlighet (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Goldberg, 1993). Efter femfaktorteorin har flera teorier uppfunnits, och på basen av dessa konstruerar man ofta personlighetstest. I den föreliggande avhandlingen används HEXACO-60, där de grundläggande huvuddragen är: ärlighet/ödmjukhet, känslosamhet, extraversion, vänlighet/värme, samvetsgrannhet samt öppenhet till upplevelser. HEXACO-60 används ofta då dragen vänlighet/värme, ärlighet/ödmjukhet och känslosamhet är av specifikt intresse. Draget ärlighet/ödmjukhet är ett speciellt viktigt tillägg till personlighetsteorin, eftersom den mäter etiskt beteende och beteende som främjar samhället (Ashton & Lee, 2005; Ashton & Lee, 2009).

Hypotesen formades i linje med studien av Eastwick m.fl. (2017) och var att personlighetsdragen hos en fokuspersons partners inte kommer att klustra i hög grad, det vill säga att en fokuspersons partners inte kommer vara signifikant lika när det kommer till deras personlighetsdrag.

**Metod**

Forskningsplanen för studien blev godkänd av den forskningsetiska nämnden vid Åbo Akademi. Deltagarna rekryterades i två olika etapper: först rekryterades fokuspersoner (personer vars partners studeras), och sedan rekryterade fokuspersonerna själva minst två av sina

nuvarande/före detta partners. Fokuspersonerna deltog frivilligt. Alla deltagarna måste ha fyllt 18 år och gett sitt samtycke till deltagande i studien. Studien utfördes med en nätenkät, där enkät 1 (åt fokuspersoner) delades på sociala medier, och enkät 2 (åt partners) delades via en länk som fokuspersonerna skickade ut till minst två av sina nuvarande/före detta partners. Anonymitet försäkrades genom en deltagarkod som fokuspersonen konstruerade och sedan skickade ut till alla partners hen kontaktade inför studien. Deltagarkoden möjliggjorde den anonyma kopplingen mellan rätt fokusperson och grupp av partners.

Alla grupper där bara en partner hade svarat, eller där minst två partners inte hade svarat på de nödvändiga frågorna i enkäten slopades. Den slutliga mängden grupper (indelade enligt fokusperson) var 15, och mängden partners var 44. Medelvärdet för partners/fokusperson var 2,93.

Enkät 1 bestod av instruktioner för fokuspersoner, ifyllning av deltagarkod, samt frågor om fokuspersonens kön och medborgarskap. Enkät 2 innehöll personlighetstestet HEXACO-60 samt frågor om bland annat kön, sexualitet, medborgarskap samt längd och vikt. Eftersom projektet innehöll element utöver teman i den föreliggande avhandlingen innehöll enkät 2 också frågor om värderingar och attityder.

HEXACO-60 består av 60 frågor, där varje personlighetsdrag (eller domän) består av tio frågor. Domänen ärlighet/ödmjukhet, känslosamhet, extraversion, vänlighet/värme, samvetsgrannhet och öppenhet till upplevelser tillhör huvudgrupperna, som kan ytterligare delas in i 24 undergrupper (ärlighet, rättvisa, avstyrande av girighet, ödmjukhet, rädsla, ångest, beroende, sentimentalitet, social självkänsla, social djärvhet, sällskaplighet, livlighet, överseende, ömhet, flexibilitet, tålamod, organisationsförmåga, uthållighet, perfektionism, prydhet, uppskattning av estetik, nyfikenhet, kreativitet och konventionalitet). Skalan i HEXACO-60 är en Likert-skala med värden från 1-5 (1 = håller inte alls med, 5 = håller med helt). Att få lågt på skalan för exempelvis extraversion innebär att man upplever sig som opopulär, trivs inte att vara i centrum av folks uppmärksamhet, gillar inte sociala sammanhang samt känner sig mindre optimistisk och livlig än andra (Lee & Ashton, 2009).

De statistiska analyserna utfördes med R 3.5.1 med paketen lme4 (Bates, Maechler, Bolker & Walker, 2015), Matrix (Bates, Maechler, Davis, Oehlschlägel, Riedy, 2018) och lmerTest (Kuznetsova, Brockhoff, & Christensen, 2017) på Rstudio för Windows. Som modell användes en hierarkisk linjär modell där första nivån i hierarkin bildades av parterna i varje grupp, och där

andra nivån bildades av fokuspersonerna. Slumpmässiga variansanalyser beräknades för både inom- och mellangrupps varians. Intraklass korrelationen (ICC) för varje grupp beräknades enligt fokusperson. ICC används ofta då enheterna är organiserade gruppvis, och indikerar hur lika enheterna (här parterna) är inom gruppen, samt tar också i beaktande variansen mellan grupperna. ICC är liten då den når åtminstone 0,10, moderat då den når 0,20 och stor när den når 0,30 (Gignac & Szodorai, 2016; Eastwick m.fl., 2017). Om exempelvis extraversion når den höga nivån 0,30, innebär detta att 30 % av variansen förklaras av fokuspersonen (d.v.s. att den klustrar med 30 %). Klustring syns bara då mellangruppsvarians är större än inomgruppsvarians. Detta innebär att klustring inte syns om alla fokuspersoner har valt lika (t.ex. om de alla föredrar extraverta partners). Noll hypotesen testades med ett F-test, och för att kontrollera multipla test utfördes en Bonferroni korrigering, där den anpassade signifikansnivån blev $p= 0,008$ för huvudgrupperna och $p=0,002$ för undergrupperna.

## Resultat

Tabell 5 visar resultaten för varje personlighetsdrag indelade i huvudgrupp och undergrupp. ICC varierade från 0 till 0,57. Personlighetsdraget känslosamhet var det enda från huvudgruppen som nådde miniminivån av 0,10, med ICC 0,28. Resultaten var dock icke-signifikanta ($p>0.05$). Inom undergruppen var det sju personlighetsdrag som nådde miniminivån av ICC 0,10, där sentimentalitet var den enda som var signifikant (med ICC 0,57). Figur 2 representerar klustring inom grupperna när man isolerat dragen sentimentalitet, känslosamhet och extraversion. Sentimentalitet representerar stark klustring (57 %), där noderna inom gruppen är nära varandra (eller rent av på varandra), men själva grupperna placerar sig på olika ställen av figuren. Om man jämför med extraversion med ingen klustring alls, kan man se att noderna är alla placerade vid samma ställe av figuren. Detta innebär att fokuspersonerna har valt ganska lika då det gäller extraversion.

## Diskussion

Målet med den föreliggande avhandlingen var att undersöka om människors nuvarande och/eller före detta partners är lika när det gäller personlighetsdrag. Målet var att se om personlighet hos

potentiella partners styr partnerval. Hypotesen i den föreliggande avhandlingen var att partnerna av en fokusperson inte kommer att vara lika när det kommer till deras personlighetsdrag. Hypotesen formades enligt studien av Eastwick m.fl. (2017) där evidens för likheter mellan en persons flera partners inte funnits utöver attraktivitet hos partnerna. Upplägget av studien var tidseffektiv och målen med studien gjordes tydligt för deltagarna, men metoden resulterade också i en låg sampelstorlek (N= 15 fokuspersoner, 44 partners). Trots detta öppnar upplägget ett användbart format för framtida studier som vill fokusera på följdriktighet i partnerval.

Den huvudsakliga slutsatsen var att det enligt samplet inte verkar finnas belägg för att personligheten hos en persons partners är lika varandra. Känslosamhet var det enda huvuddraget som hade en ICC som var högre än noll. Resultaten för känslosamhet var dock icke-signifikanta. Av undergrupperna var det bara 11 personlighetsdrag som hade ICC över noll, och bara sju av dem hade ICC över 0,10. Av de sju dragen var bara en, sentimentalitet signifikant. Inget av resultaten förblev signifikanta efter kontrollering för multipla test. Detta innebär att deltagarna i studien inte har en viss "typ" när det kommer till partnerval. Den låga signifikansnivån i analyserna kan förklaras av sampelstorleken, men eftersom draget sentimentalitet hade hög ICC även med låga deltagarantalet, kan detta tyda på att draget kunde klustra signifikant med ett större sampel. Detta kunde tyda på att människor tenderar att ha skilda/olika typer när det kommer till hur sentimental, det vill säga hur känslostyrd i motsats till rationell ens partner är. Resultaten från den föreliggande studien förkastar inte tanken om klustring i partnerval helt och hållet. Variabler som attraktivitet och utbildning har till exempel resulterat i signifikant klustring i tidigare studier (Eastwick m.fl. 2017). Andra variabler så som värderingar och attityder anses också ha mera betydelse i början av förhållanden, och kunde också spela en viktigare roll i partnerval (Luo & Klohnen, 2005).

Enligt evolutionspsykologiska teorier finns det könsskillnader när det kommer till partnerval (Conroy-Beam & Buss, 2016; Landolt, Lalumiere, & Quinsey, 1995; Miller & Todd 1998). Dessa skillnader beror främst på kvinnors och mäns olika grad av investering i avkomman, där kvinnor anses vara det könet som investerar mera än män (Trivers, 1972). På grund av detta kunde man anta kvinnor är mera diskriminerande när det kommer till partnerval, och att man i ett sampel bestående av bara kvinnor kunde hitta mera klustring än i ett blandat sampel. Eftersom samplet i den föreliggande studien var så litet, kunde inte analyser enligt kön utföras.

Eftersom deltagarna i den föreliggande studien inte behövde vara i kontakt med sådana partners de inte själva var bekväma med att kontakta kan det ha funnits en systematisk snedvridning i selektionen (d.v.s. eftersom fokuspersonerna antagligen inte delade studien med partners de inte ville kontakta, var de partners de kontaktade antagligen lättare att närma sig och därför mer lika varandra i vissa aspekter). Att hitta (eller inte hitta) klustring i ett mer homogent sampel kan dock ge starkare belägg för resultaten eftersom konceptet att ha en "typ" existerar bara då vi väljer olika. Ifall samplet skulle vara heterogent, kunde klustring bara vara en reflektion av skillnaderna bland fokuspersonerna och inte tyda på riktig klustring. Några personlighetsdrag kan också anses vara mer önskvärda universellt. I figur 2 kan man exempelvis se hur alla fokuspersoner valt ganska lika då det kommer till extraversion. Detta kan innebära att folk i allmänhet föredrar partners som är lite mer extraverta än introverta, och då syns inte klustring i samplet. Universellt önskvärda personlighetsdrag kunde också klassas som en passiv faktor som påverkar partnerval, eftersom våra attityder formas enligt den miljön vi lever i.

Det är viktigt att notera att våra preferenser i partnerval inte alltid reflekterar hur vi valt. Alla har inte en jämlik möjlighet att välja partners enligt de egna preferenserna. Detta regleras av individens värde som partner (Eastwick m.fl. 2017). Att se hur en persons värde som partner påverkar hur mycket ens partners klustrar kunde vara ett intressant ämne för framtida forskning.

Begränsningarna med den föreliggande studien var sampelstorleken som förblev liten på grund av rekryteringsprocessen som gjordes i två etapper. På grund av sampelstorleken kunde inte analyserna för könsskillnaderna utföras. Samplet var antagligen också homogent, men i likhet med vad som diskuterades tidigare om homogena sampel kan det i detta fall antyda resultaten i verkligheten också är sant. Personligheten hos en persons många partners har inte studerats tidigare, och studien medför således en ny metod av datainsamling för framtida studier.

Sammanfattningsvis var den föreliggande studiens mål att studera om personlighet har betydelse i partnerval, och resultaten tydde på att vi inte har en viss "typ" i partnerval. Sentimentalitet var det enda draget som resulterade i signifikant klustring. Eftersom andra drag också klustrade, men med icke-signifikanta resultat, kunde detta ge anlag för att klustring kunde finnas i ett större sampel. Vi kunde inte heller studera könsskillnader, och det kunde vara möjligt att klustring är mer tydligt i ett sampel av kvinnor. Framtida studier borde fokusera på större sampel med bättre statistisk styrka.

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# Appendix

## HEXACO Personality inventory (HEXACO-60)

© Kibeom Lee, Ph.D., & Michael C. Ashton, Ph.D.

Directions:

On the following pages you will find a series of statements about you.  Please read each statement and decide how much you agree or disagree with that statement.  Then write your response in the space next to the statement using the following scale:

>5 = strongly agree
>4 = agree
>3 = neutral (neither agree nor disagree)
>2 = disagree
>1 = strongly disagree

Please answer every statement, even if you are not completely sure of your response.

1. I would be quite bored by a visit to an art gallery.
2. I plan ahead and organize things, to avoid scrambling at the last minute.
3. I rarely hold a grudge, even against people who have badly wronged me.
4. I feel reasonably satisfied with myself overall.
5. I would feel afraid if I had to travel in bad weather conditions.
6. I wouldn't use flattery to get a raise or promotion at work, even if I thought it would succeed.
7. I'm interested in learning about the history and politics of other countries.
8. I often push myself very hard when trying to achieve a goal.
9. People sometimes tell me that I am too critical of others.
10. I rarely express my opinions in group meetings.
11. I sometimes can't help worrying about little things.
12. If I knew that I could never get caught, I would be willing to steal a million dollars.
13. I would enjoy creating a work of art, such as a novel, a song, or a painting.
14. When working on something, I don't pay much attention to small details.
15. People sometimes tell me that I'm too stubborn.
16. I prefer jobs that involve active social interaction to those that involve working alone.
17. When I suffer from a painful experience, I need someone to make me feel comfortable.
18. Having a lot of money is not especially important to me.
19. I think that paying attention to radical ideas is a waste of time.
20. I make decisions based on the feeling of the moment rather than on careful thought.

21. People think of me as someone who has a quick temper.
22. On most days, I feel cheerful and optimistic.
23. I feel like crying when I see other people crying.
24. I think that I am entitled to more respect than the average person is.
25. If I had the opportunity, I would like to attend a classical music concert.
26. When working, I sometimes have difficulties due to being disorganized.
27. My attitude toward people who have treated me badly is "forgive and forget".
28. I feel that I am an unpopular person.
29. When it comes to physical danger, I am very fearful.
30. If I want something from someone, I will laugh at that person's worst jokes.
31. I've never really enjoyed looking through an encyclopedia.
32. I do only the minimum amount of work needed to get by.
33. I tend to be lenient in judging other people.
34. In social situations, I'm usually the one who makes the first move.
35. I worry a lot less than most people do.
36. I would never accept a bribe, even if it were very large.
37. People have often told me that I have a good imagination.
38. I always try to be accurate in my work, even at the expense of time.
39. I am usually quite flexible in my opinions when people disagree with me.
40. The first thing that I always do in a new place is to make friends.
41. I can handle difficult situations without needing emotional support from anyone else.
42. I would get a lot of pleasure from owning expensive luxury goods.
43. I like people who have unconventional views.
44. I make a lot of mistakes because I don't think before I act.
45. Most people tend to get angry more quickly than I do.
46. Most people are more upbeat and dynamic than I generally am.
47. I feel strong emotions when someone close to me is going away for a long time.
48. I want people to know that I am an important person of high status.
49. I don't think of myself as the artistic or creative type.
50. People often call me a perfectionist.
51. Even when people make a lot of mistakes, I rarely say anything negative.
52. I sometimes feel that I am a worthless person.
53. Even in an emergency I wouldn't feel like panicking.
54. I wouldn't pretend to like someone just to get that person to do favors for me.
55. I find it boring to discuss philosophy.
56. I prefer to do whatever comes to mind, rather than stick to a plan.
57. When people tell me that I'm wrong, my first reaction is to argue with them.
58. When I'm in a group of people, I'm often the one who speaks on behalf of the group.
59. I remain unemotional even in situations where most people get very sentimental.
60. I'd be tempted to use counterfeit money, if I were sure I could get away with it.

PRESSMEDDELANDE

**Människor verkar inte ha en återkommande preferens för en viss personlighets "typ" då det kommer till romantiska och/eller sexuella partners**

Pro gradu-avhandling i psykologi
Fakulteten för humanoria, psykologi och teologi, Åbo Akademi


Resultaten från en pro-gradu avhandling i psykologi vid Åbo Akademi tyder på att människor inte verkar välja partners (romantiska och/eller sexuella) enligt en viss personlighets "typ". Med andra ord verkar det som att folk inte har en personlig typ vad som gäller partners, utan valet sker troligen mera slumpmässigt, i varje fall då personers verkliga partners undersökts. Avhandlingen undersökte olika människors före detta och/eller nuvarande partners, och syftet var att se om det fanns likheter i personlighetsdrag mellan partners av en och samma person.

Det enda personlighetsdraget som visade systematiska likheter bland deltagarnas partners var sentimentalitet, en undergrupp till personlighetsdraget känslosamhet. Övriga personlighetsdrag resulterade inte i systematiska likheter bland deltagarnas partners. Avhandlingens begränsning var få deltagare, 15 personer vilkas partners likheter studerades. Resultaten kunde därför se olika ut ifall deltagarantalet var större.

På grund av det låga deltagarantalet kan inte resultaten av avhandlingen dra raka slutsatser. Personlighet hos en persons flera partners har inte tidigare studerats, och avhandlingen erbjuder därför ett intressant och användbart upplägg för framtida forskning.

Datat till studien är insamlat via en nätenkät, där de undersökta fyllde i ett omfattande personlighetstest (HEXACO-60).

Avhandlingen utfördes av Julia Martin under handledning av Annika Gunst PsM och Patrik Jern PsD


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