

The Association Between Perceived Mate Value Discrepancy and Intrasexual
Competitiveness in Heterosexual Individuals

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Master's Thesis in Psychology

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Abstract: <p>Earlier studies have indicated that mate value discrepancy influences relationship satisfaction, jealousy, and controlling behaviors in relationships. However, the association between mate value discrepancy and intrasexual competitiveness has not been explored in previous studies. Therefore, the aim of the present study was to investigate whether an association between mate value discrepancy and intrasexual competitiveness can be observed. The study used existing data from 4,848 Finnish heterosexual adult respondents (3,237 women and 1,611 men) who had completed an online survey. Mate value discrepancy was measured with a variable created by subtracting the participant's estimate of their partner's mate value score from the participant's self-estimated mate value score. The Intrasexual Competition Scale was used to measure intrasexual competitiveness. A factorial ANCOVA and a GEE multilevel regression analysis indicated that a high mate value relative to one's partner was positively associated with higher intrasexual competitiveness in comparison with a low mate value relative to one's partner. Men were overall more intrasexually competitive than women, but the differences within the sexes were larger than between the sexes. Younger individuals were more intrasexually competitive than older individuals. In conclusion, the findings suggest that higher valued mates are more intrasexually competitive than lower-valued mates. Further research is needed to examine what other factors could explain a greater amount of the variance in intrasexual competitiveness and investigate the reasons why individuals who perceive themselves as the higher valued mate compared to their partner tend to be more intrasexually competitive.</p>	
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Avhandlingens titel: Sambandet mellan upplevd diskrepans i partnervärde och graden av intrasexuell tävlan hos heterosexuella individer	
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Abstrakt: <p>Resultat i tidigare forskning indikerar att diskrepans i partnervärde influerar en individs tillfredsställelse med sitt parförhållande, upplevda svartsjuka och kontrollerande beteenden inom parförhållanden. Däremot finns det en avsaknad av studier som skulle ha undersökt sambandet mellan diskrepans i partnervärde och graden av intrasexuell tävlan och därmed är syftet med den här studien att undersöka om ett sådant samband kan observeras. Samplet i den här studien bestod i sin helhet av 4 848 heterosexuella vuxna finländare (3 237 kvinnor och 1 611 män) som hade besvarat en nätenkät. Variabeln för diskrepans i partnervärde skapades genom att subtrahera deltagarens estimat av sin partners partnervärde från deltagarens självestimata av det egna partnervärdet. För att mäta deltagarnas grad av intrasexuell tävlan användes frågeformuläret "Intrasexual Competition Scale". Enligt resultaten från en faktoriell ANCOVA och ett GEE-test tenderar individer som anser sig ha ett högre partnervärde i jämförelse med sin partner, uppvisa en högre grad av intrasexuell tävlan. Män uppvisade överlag en högre grad av intrasexuell tävlan jämfört med kvinnor, men skillnaden är mycket liten och skillnaderna inom könen var större än mellan könen. Yngre individer uppvisade en högre grad av intrasexuell tävlan jämfört med äldre individer. Sammanfattningsvis tyder resultaten i den här studien på att individer av högre partnervärde uppvisar en högre grad av intrasexuell tävlan i jämförelse med individer av lägre partnervärde. Fortsatt forskning inom ämnet behövs för att undersöka vilka faktorer som förklarar en större andel av variansen för den individuella graden av intrasexuell tävlan. Framtida forskning behövs även för att utforska orsakerna till att personer som upplever att de har ett högre partnervärde än sin partner, tenderar att ha en högre grad av intrasexuell tävlan.</p>	
Nyckelord: Intrasexuell tävlan, Diskrepans i partnervärde, Partner, Vuxna	
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Introduction

Previous studies have shown that mate value discrepancy is an important factor influencing relationship satisfaction (Conroy-Beam et al., 2016; Hromatko et al., 2015; Nowak & Danel, 2014), jealousy (Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2007), and controlling behaviors in relationships (Danel et al., 2017). Mate value refers to all the features that improve a successful reproduction of an individual (Trivers, 1972), and includes not only physical but also psychological and social aspects that affect individual mate choice in a certain context (Buss & Barnes, 1986; Lippa, 2007). According to Nowak and Danel (2014), the mate value discrepancy between partners in a relationship might be a factor (among many others) that influences a couple's well-being and could therefore be important in a clinical context.

Intrasexual competitiveness refers to the extent to which one views same-sex peers in competitive terms over access to mates and is related to both personality factors and environmental conditions (Welling & Shackelford, 2019). Nettle (2006) argued that individual differences in personality characteristics can be adaptive under different conditions. Being extremely intrasexually competitive might be advantageous in certain contexts, yet maladaptive in other contexts, and having a low mate value relative to one's partner could be one of those maladaptive contexts.

Indeed, Buunk and Stulp (2014) found that intrasexual competitiveness among adolescents is directly related to their parents' socio-economic status. They found that female adolescents were consistently more intrasexually competitive the higher their parents' socio-economic status. Among male adolescents, those with parents of high socio-economic status were the most intrasexually competitive. However, among male adolescents, those with parents of the lowest socio-economic status were also more intrasexually competitive than those with parents of medium socioeconomic status. Females in low and high socio-economic groups were more intrasexually competitive compared to males within those respective

groups, whereas males were more intrasexually competitive compared to females within the medium socio-economic group. In another study, van Brummen and Buunk (2016) found that girls who grew up without their biological father were more intrasexually competitive compared to girls who had grown up with their biological father. Research also suggests that for women and gay men, intrasexual competitiveness is related to eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa, and it is hypothesized that intrasexual competition could be the underlying mechanism that triggers eating disorders where one aspires to appear more youthful and thin than others within one's sex (Faer et al., 2005; Li et al., 2010).

Although several studies have been conducted on either mate value discrepancy or intrasexual competitiveness, there is, to my knowledge, no study that would have explored the association between perceived mate value discrepancy and intrasexual competitiveness. Therefore, this study aims to determine whether such a contextual association can be observed.

Intrasexual Competition

Intrasexual competition refers to rivalry over access to mates when encountering same-sex individuals (Buunk & Fisher, 2009; Buunk & Massar, 2012; Fernandez et al., 2019). Darwin (1871) observed the importance of defeating intrasexual rivals for contested mating opportunities and proposed that intrasexual competition evolved as an important behavioral adaptation for maximized reproductive success.

According to parental investment theory (Trivers, 1972), the sex that invests more in its offspring will be more selective when choosing a mate, in contrast to the less-investing sex that will have more intrasexual competition for access to mates. Women invest at a minimum of 9 months in time for one pregnancy, and after that period, they also invest a considerable number of physiological resources (for example, the risks associated with childbirth and breastfeeding after giving birth). For men, reproductive success requires a relatively small

minimum investment in both time and physiological resources (at the very least, an event of copulation). Although women's parental investment is often greater than men's, among humans, both sexes generally invest in parental care, and lengthy monogamous relationships are common. Therefore, both sexes are discriminating in the choice of mates (Trivers, 1972).

The relative parental investment of the sexes is considered the motive behind the different mating strategies of the sexes. According to Trivers's theory, women should favor mates that are able and willing to provide additional parental investment (social, psychological, and material resources), whereas men should adopt a strategy that maximizes reproductive success by copulating as often as possible. Buss (1988) studied mate attraction and intrasexual competition using the theory of parental investment and found sex differences in the intrasexual strategies used to attract mates and compete with rivals of one's sex. Men and women both seek the best mate possible, but have different preferences depending on what traits or abilities in a mate maximize an offspring's chances of survival, and therefore they compete within different domains with members of the same sex to attract mates (Buss, 1988; Kenrick et al., 1993, 1994).

Because men favor a mate who is likely to successfully bear, conceive and care for offspring and who is unlikely to do so with other men, women try to enhance their physical attractiveness and to appear more healthy, fertile, youthful, and less promiscuous than other women. In contrast, women prefer a mate that can provide additional resources and security, which is why men tend to highlight their ability to provide resources and security in addition to displaying their dominance and physical strength (Buss, 1988).

Because people compete with same-sex¹ individuals on the traits that make them a valued partner to the opposite sex, women perceive provocatively dressed and physically

¹ Note. In the present study, "sex" refers to biological sex in a sexually reproducing species (instead, "gender" is used when referring to subjective identity).

attractive rivals as more threatening and distressing (Vaillancourt & Sharma, 2011), while men perceive stronger and dominant rivals with more financial resources and promising careers as more threatening and distressing (Andersson, 1994; Buss et al., 2000; Buunk et al., 2007; Dijkstra & Buunk, 2002). These distressing characteristics in rivals are also features that have shown to evoke the most jealousy in individuals when they are asked to imagine their partner flirting with a same-sex peer (Dijkstra & Buunk, 1998).

Intrasexual Competition as an Attitude

As mentioned previously, intrasexual competitiveness regards the degree one views the confrontation with people of one's own sex in antagonistic and competitive terms, especially in situations where a member of the opposite sex is present (Buunk & Fisher, 2009; Fernandez et al., 2019). Research suggests that negative reactions toward attractive members of one's sex emerge when individuals reach puberty, an age at which mating-related motives become developmentally significant (Agthe et al., 2013). Being exposed to more attractive same-sex peers has been shown to be perceived as a threat to one's self-esteem (Park & Maner, 2009), mate value (Gutierrez et al., 1999), and long-term romantic relationship (Buss et al., 2000).

Strategies like competitor derogation (Buss & Dedden, 1990; Schmitt & Buss, 1996; Vaillancourt, 2013), self-promotion (Fisher et al., 2009), competitor manipulation, and mate manipulation are tactics used when experiencing intrasexual competition (Fisher & Cox, 2011). Rivals are categorized based on their desirability and the amount of threat they pose to an individual's relationship (Maner et al., 2012). The activation of the mating-related goals which lead people with high levels of chronic jealousy (Maner et al., 2009) and relatively low self-esteem (Agthe et al., 2011) to evaluate and treat intrasexual rivals especially negatively, have been shown to occur automatically and implicitly (Maner et al., 2009; Massar & Buunk, 2010).

Some research has been conducted on possible differences between gender, sexual orientation, and mate selection behaviors. Hughes et al. (2020) studied the association between sexuality and intrasexual competitiveness among women and found that lesbian women and heterosexual women display similar levels of competitiveness, implying that both groups experience intrasexual competitiveness to an equal extent. Regarding preferences and behavior in mate selection, gay and heterosexual men have similar age preferences for young sexual partners, whereas some lesbian women display more often gender-atypical age preferences preferring younger, rather than older sexual partners compared to heterosexual women (Russock, 2011; Silverthorne & Quinsey, 2000). Lesbian women also tend to display their wealth and resources more often in attempts to attract or retain a mate relative to heterosexual women (VanderLaan & Vasey, 2008).

Attractive adolescent women are more likely at risk of being indirectly victimized through indirect aggression by their female peers compared to less attractive women, whereas attractiveness seems to be a protective factor against being indirectly victimized among adolescent men (Leenaars et al., 2008). Women usually have friends who are similar in attractiveness, and the less attractive friend in a pair of friends tends to perceive more mating rivalry in their friendship (Bleske-Rechek & Lighthall, 2010).

Assortative Mating and Mate Value

A person's mate value is an estimate of how valuable that person would be as a partner in a reproductive relationship or how attractive they would be as a potential mate for members of the opposite sex (Brase & Guy, 2004). Mate value consists of individual characteristics that influence one's ability to find and retain a mate, as well as characteristics that could potentially contribute to a mate's reproductive success (Waynforth, 2001). Physical attractiveness, youth, and a low waist-to-hip ratio (the dimensionless ratio of the circumference of the waist to that of the hips) are the main determinants of mate value for

women, whereas access to resources is the primary feature that influences mate value for men (Buss et al., 2000).

People try to obtain a mate who is as valuable as possible but one who also has a similar mate value to oneself (Buston & Emlen, 2003). The theory of assortative mating suggests that people are drawn to mates that “match” their value or worth as mates, particularly when starting long-term relationships (Buston & Emlen, 2003; Gangestad & Simpson, 2000), and a study by Sidelinger and McMullen (2008) found that both partners in committed relationships tend to perceive their mates as having higher mate values than themselves. However, there are romantic long-term relationships involving two people who differ significantly in mate value. This perceived difference in mate value between two parties in a romantic relationship has been operationalized as mate value discrepancy (MVD). In the literature, a mate of higher value than his/her partner is often assigned the abbreviation “HVM”, whereas the mate of lower value is assigned the abbreviation “LVM”. The status as either HVM or LVM can be referred to as relative mate value, RMV because it is strictly interpreted as the person’s mate value relative to the partner’s mate value (Buss, 1994).

Being the LVM has been associated with being more likely to experience jealousy and to forgive a partner’s transgression, despite experiencing jealousy (Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2007). People partnered with high-value mates who would be difficult to replace tend to experience high levels of relationship satisfaction regardless of their pool of obtainable alternative mates, whereas being the HVM and being partnered with a mate who is less desirable than one’s obtainable alternative mates is associated with decreasing levels of relationship satisfaction (Conroy-Beam et al., 2016). Being of roughly equal mate value with one’s partner has been linked to both more confidence in the fidelity and longevity of one’s relationship (Buss & Shackelford, 1997) and relationship satisfaction (Conroy-Beam et al., 2016). According to Conroy-Beam et al. (2016), mate value discrepancies have evolved to

motivate relationship maintenance or termination depending on the pool of mates that one has access to and whether there would be mates that match one's mate value better than one's current mate.

Being an LVM in a couple, thus having a partner that is harder to replace and being easier to replace by one's partner, has been associated with more frequent mate retention behaviors, relative to being an HVM in a couple (Buss, 2002). Mate retention behaviors are actions that aim to maintain access to a mate and reducing the probability of an acquired mate's infidelity and defection from the relationship (Arnocky & Vaillancourt, 2012). Mate guarding is a form of mate retention behavior, evolved to enable long-term committed mating by warding off potential mate poachers and preventing the loss of a mate, to prevent suffering of reproductive costs (Buss, 2002). Mate guarding can be expressed in behaviors ranging from vigilance to violence, including indirect modes of aggression (Davies and Shackelford, 2017). Redlick (2016) found that HVM's are more likely to be "lured away" by mate poachers who try to knowingly attract someone who already is in a relationship and, therefore HVM's require more investment to hold on to as partners.

In couples where partners are of highly discrepant mate value, both the LVM and the HVM tend to experience relational uncertainty, but it is hypothesized that the reasons behind the uncertainty may be different for the LVM compared to the HVM. According to Buunk and Fisher (2009), the LVM might determine that the costs (for example hypervigilance of rivals and mate guarding) of continuing to maintain the relationship with an HVM exceeds the benefits, and therefore might choose to terminate the relationship. In contrast, the HVM might consider whether it is advantageous for themselves to remain in a relationship of high mate value discrepancy when more attractive and more compatible mates might be available. In summary, both partners might question their desire to continue in a relationship where they are either significantly inferior or superior to their partner. Consequently, mate value

discrepancy offers predictive power about relative behaviors between a couple, perceived relational uncertainty, and relationship satisfaction in response to cues of mate replaceability.

The Current Study

Although studies investigating either intrasexual competition or mate value discrepancy have been conducted, earlier studies have not (to my knowledge) investigated the association between these two variables. In most of the earlier studies investigating either intrasexual competitiveness or mate value discrepancy, the sample sizes have been relatively small, whereas in the present study a large, population-based sample was used, and the results can therefore potentially be generalized to a broader group of people. Research on this topic is crucial to improve the understanding of what contextual factors might influence intrasexual competitiveness and if mate value discrepancy, which has been shown to be associated with relationship satisfaction (Conroy-Beam et al., 2016; Hromatko et al., 2015; Nowak & Danel, 2014), could be one of those factors.

The present study aimed to investigate the association between perceived mate value discrepancy and intrasexual competitiveness as well as the association between self-estimated mate value and intrasexual competitiveness. Given theory and previous research, two main hypotheses were set:

1. Individuals who perceive themselves as having a lower mate value relative to their partner will be more intrasexually competitive, irrespective of their sex. Whereas people who perceive themselves as having a higher mate value compared to their partner will be less intersexually competitive.
2. Individuals who perceive themselves as having a high mate value will be less intrasexually competitive than individuals who perceive themselves as having a low mate value.

Furthermore, it was hypothesized that there would not be any significant sex differences in intrasexual competitiveness since earlier research has not found any sex differences in the tendency to be intrasexually competitive.

Method

Participants

The sample used in the present study consisted of responses from adult twins and siblings of twins who had taken part in a large, Finnish population-based survey study called the Genetics of Sexuality and Aggression study (Johansson et al., 2013). The survey included questions on different topics such as sexuality, mental health, and relationships. The invitation letters for the data collection were sent to the potential participants between November 2018 and January 2019 and the total response rate was 29%. The original data included responses from a total of 9,564 individuals living in Finland at the time of data collection and 97% (9,319) of those individuals consented to their data being used for scientific purposes. For the current study, 4,848 (3,237 women and 1,611 men) individuals who responded to the questions about both intrasexual competitiveness and mate value were included in the sample. The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 61 ($M = 30.48$, $SD = 8.22$). The research plan describing the data-collection procedure was reviewed and approved and received a favorable review from the Ethics Review Board of Åbo Akademi University, in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration. Before the data collection, the participants were informed that their participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous, and written informed consent for participation was obtained from all participants.

Out of the 9,148 (6,025 women, 3,123 men) participants who had provided answers for the survey, 2,737 (1,686 women, 1,051 men) were excluded due to not being in a relationship at the time of the data collection. Another 342 men and 708 women did not

respond to the mate value questions that were used as the measurement for mate value discrepancy and were excluded. In addition, 502 participants (387 women, 115 men) who had reported that they identify as something other than heterosexuals (gay/lesbian, bi, or other) were excluded. Individuals that did not identify as heterosexuals were excluded because of the evolutionary and reproductive theoretical framework in the study (humans being a reproductive species where only a male and a female individual can reproduce). The groups for gay/lesbian, bi, or other, would also have been very small since the participants also had to be in a relationship at the time of the data collection, this would have resulted in a comparison of two groups of very different size.

The participants who had reported that they did not agree with the gender that they have in the Finnish Population Registry, were also excluded (2 participants). In addition, 2 men and 7 women were excluded due to a technical error in the data. The study was divided into two main parts based on the two hypotheses, that were tested with two different statistical tests and two different sample sizes. The sample size that was used to test the first hypothesis (part one of the study) consisted of 3,889 (2,512 women and 1,377 men) participants and the second hypothesis (part two of the study) was tested with a sample size of 4,848 (3,237 women and 1,611 men) participants. The first sample size was smaller because the potential confounding effects of genetic relatedness in the sample had to be controlled for by including only one person per family in the analysis.

Measures

Intrasexual Competition

To assess intrasexual competitiveness, the Intrasexual Competition Scale (ISC-scale) (Buunk & Fisher, 2009) was used. The sex-neutral and cross-nationally validated 12-item scale assesses differences in intrasexual competition as an attitude. The scale includes measures of one's desire to outperform and beat same-sex peers, feelings of envy and

frustration when same-sex rivals are better off, aspiration to view oneself as better than same-sex peers, and satisfaction when high-achieving individuals of one's sex lose face. These phenomena are assessed through questions that depict situations or contexts where one is confronted with a rival of one's sex. The questions are answered on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 ("Not at all applicable") to 7 ("Completely applicable"). Higher scores indicate higher levels of intrasexual competition. The items on the scale were added up to create two separate composite variables, one for women and one for men. In the present study, the internal consistency of this measure was good for both women (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.88$) and men (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.80$).

Mate Value and Mate Value Discrepancy

Two items were used to create a measure for perceived mate value discrepancy, "Overall, how would you rate your level of desirability as a partner on the following scale compared to others of the same sex?" and "If you have a partner, overall, how would you rate your partner's level of desirability as a partner on the following scale compared to others of the same sex?". The questions were answered on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 ("Extremely undesirable") to 9 ("Extremely desirable"). A variable measuring the mate value discrepancy was created by subtracting the participant's estimate of his/her partner's mate value score from the participant's self-estimated mate value score (both scores were estimated on the same scale by the participant). In other words, the mate value discrepancy measure was solely based on one individual's perception of his/her mate value as well as the mate value of their partner. To test how mate value discrepancy was associated with intrasexual competitiveness, I recoded the mate value discrepancy variable so that all discrepancies were coded as 1 or -1. A value of zero indicated that there was no discrepancy, a value of -1 indicates that the participant perceives that their partner is higher in mate value

and the value of 1 indicates that the participant perceives themselves as the mate with a higher value.

Data Analyses

The statistical analyses were conducted using the IBM SPSS 26 Statistics for Windows. Two analyses were conducted. Firstly, a factorial ANCOVA to test the first hypothesis, and secondly a GEE multilevel regression to test the second hypothesis. The factorial ANCOVA was conducted to examine the association between mate value discrepancy and intrasexual competitiveness and to test if there would be an interaction between sex, mate value discrepancy, and intrasexual competitiveness. In the ANCOVA, only one individual from each family was randomly selected and age was included as a covariate in all the analyses. I conducted follow-up tests using repeated contrasts for the main effects. For the second part of the study, a GEE analysis was conducted to investigate the association between the participants' self-estimated mate value and intrasexual competitiveness. Because the data were responses from genetically related individuals (twins and siblings of twins), the GEE procedure was chosen. This procedure allows for controlling for between-subjects dependence. The items on the ISC-scale are divided into questions directed to either women and men and therefore two separate GEE analyses were conducted, one with women and one with men. First, I excluded all individuals who were not in a relationship. This was done by filtering out all individuals who had missing values on the variable measuring the partner's mate value/attractiveness. Next, I randomly selected one individual from each family to calculate effect sizes.

Results

Descriptive statistics for the groups used in part 1 of the study can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics of the participants' relative mate value and intrasexual competitiveness

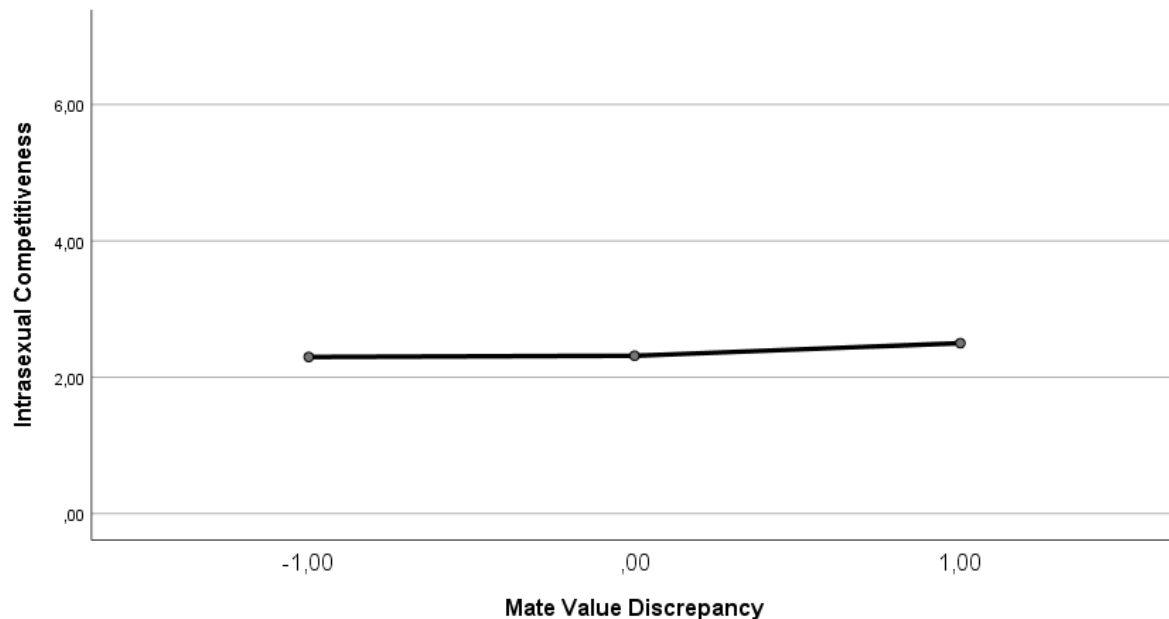
	Men			Women		
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
The participant's relative mate value to their partner						
The participant is the LVM	628	2.35	.035	1,242	2.24	.025
The participant has equal mate value to their partner	498	2.54	.040	906	2.18	.030
The participant is the HVM	251	2.57	.056	364	2.43	.047

Note. *M* = Mean, *SD* = Standard Deviation, LVM = Lower Valued Mate, HVM = Higher Valued Mate

In the first part of the study, as illustrated in Figure 1, the results of the ANCOVA showed that when sex was not taken into consideration, there was a small but significant main effect of mate value discrepancy on intrasexual competitiveness, so that individuals who considered themselves to have higher mate value than their partners were inclined to be more intrasexually competitive ($F[2;3,882 \text{ df}] = 12.032, p < .001, \eta^2 \text{ partial} = .006$). This result contradicted my first hypothesis.

Figure 1

Estimated Marginal Means of Intrasexual Competitiveness and Mate Value Discrepancy in Groups



Note. Mate value discrepancy values are coded so that -1 = the respondent considers his/her partner to have higher mate value than him/herself; 0 = the respondent considers him/herself to have equal mate value to his/her partner; 1 = the respondent considers him/herself to have higher mate value than his/her partner.

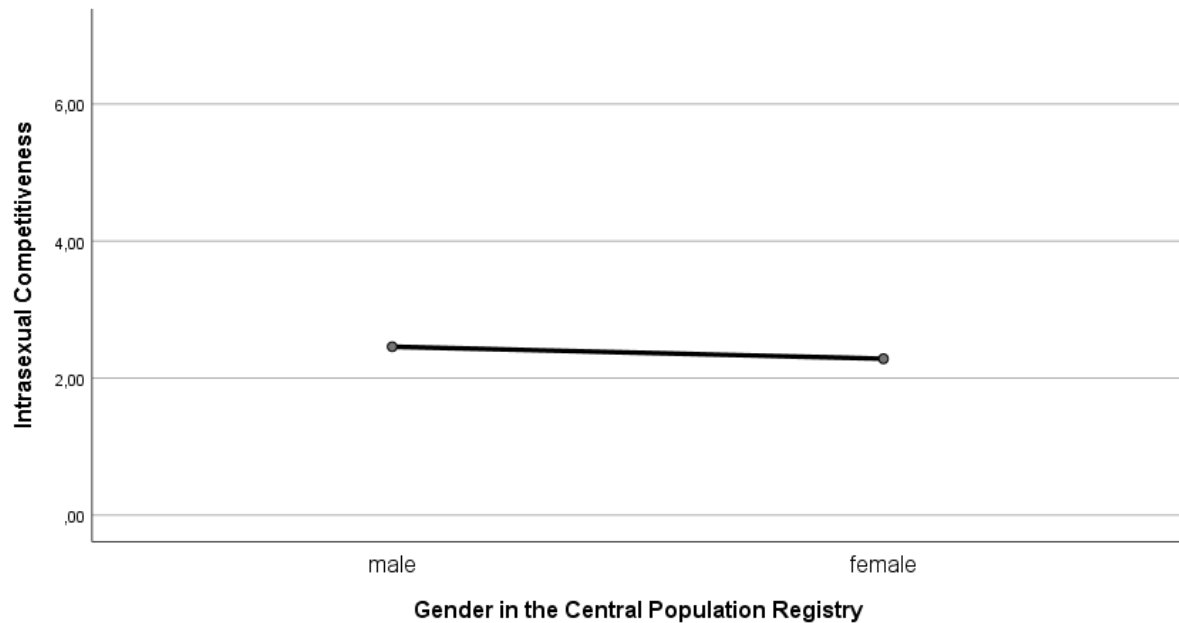
Age had a significant association ($F[1;3,882] = 11.540, p < .001, \eta^2 \text{ partial} = .003$), so that younger individuals tended to be more intrasexually competitive. Levene's test (which tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups) was significant ($F[\text{df } 5;3,883] = 5.170, p < .001$) which was expected because of the large sample size. The follow-up tests showed that the difference between those participants who considered themselves the LVM and those who considered themselves equal in mate value with their partner was not significant ($p = .611$), but the difference between those who considered themselves equal in mate value with their partner and those who considered themselves the HVM was significant ($p < .001$).

As illustrated in Figure 2, there was a main effect of sex, men ($M = 2.458, SE = .026$) tended to be overall more intrasexually competitive than women ($M = 2.283, SE = .020$). The

effect was small, but statistically significant ($F[1;3,882] = 28.597, p < .001, \eta^2 \text{ partial} = .007$) which contradicted my hypothesis as I did not expect any significant gender differences.

Figure 2

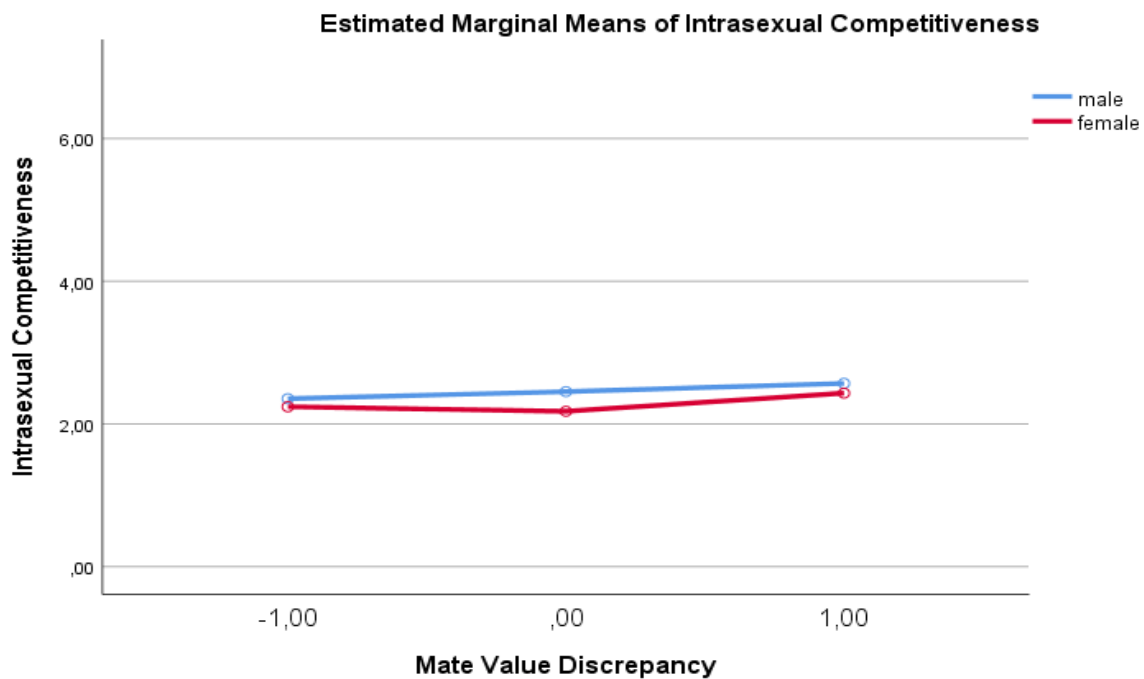
Estimated marginal means of Intrasexual Competitiveness for Gender Groups



As can be seen in Figure 3, the interaction between sex and mate value discrepancy was significant ($F[2;3,882] = 3.190, p = .041, \eta^2 \text{ partial} = .002$). However, the effect of mate value discrepancy on intrasexual competition was similar for both men and women, with the most noticeable difference between the sexes in the group where participants reported a lack of discrepancy in mate value. In the group where women experienced equal mate value, they reported lower intrasexual competitiveness compared to the two groups where women reported mate value discrepancy.

Figure 3

Interaction between sex, mate value discrepancy, and intrasexual competition



Note. Mate value discrepancy values are coded so that -1 = the respondent considers his/her partner to have higher mate value than him/herself; 0 = the respondent considers him/herself to have equal mate value to his/her partner; 1 = the respondent considers him/herself to have higher mate value than his/her partner.

In the second part of the study, the results of the GEE regression analysis showed that the participants' estimation of their mate value only had a positive significant association with intrasexual competitiveness in men but not in women. This result contradicted my second hypothesis. The results of the GEE regression analysis can be found in Table 2.

Table 2

Associations Between Self-Estimated Mate Value and Intrasexual Competitiveness

	Wald χ^2	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	η^2 partial
Men	8.888	1	.003	.046	.0153	.010
Women	.817	1	.094	-.010	.0112	.010

Note. Wald χ^2 = Wald chi-squared, *B* = unstandardized regression coefficient, *SE* = standard error of the *B*. Age was included as a covariate in the analysis.

Discussion

The present study aimed to investigate how mate value discrepancy and self-estimated mate value are associated with intrasexual competitiveness and whether there would be any differences between the sexes. I expected that individuals who rated themselves as having a lower mate value than their partner would be more intrasexually competitive in comparison to individuals who rated themselves as having a higher mate value than their partner. This hypothesis was set due to a theoretical prediction, namely that an LVM will be at increased likelihood of being hypervigilant towards rivals that can pose a threat to the LVM if he or she is in a relationship with a partner of higher mate value (Buss et al., 2000; Buunk & Fisher, 2009). More frequent mate retention behaviors have also been observed among lower-valued mates (Buss, 2002). From this follows that lower-valued mates require more investment to hold on to because they are more likely to be seduced by mate poachers (Redlick, 2016). Therefore, being intrasexually competitive could be an adaptive trait for LVMs in a relationship. I also hypothesized that individuals who rated themselves as having a high mate value would be less intrasexually competitive than individuals who rated themselves having a low mate value. No sex differences were expected because previous studies have not found any sex differences in the tendency to be intrasexually competitive.

Main Findings and Interpretations

The results from the first part of the present study showed that there was a small significant association between mate value discrepancy and intrasexual competitiveness, indicating that individuals who considered themselves to have a higher mate value than their partner tended to be more intrasexually competitive. This result contradicts my first hypothesis. It is possible that individuals who have a high mate value are also more likely to possess other characteristics that contribute to a higher degree of intrasexual competitiveness. For example, it could be that a high degree of general competitiveness is also associated with

intrasexual competitiveness (i.e., more competitive individuals could have more confidence in their ability to succeed in a competitive setting and might perceive situations as more intrasexually competitive). More competitive individuals could also be inclined to perceive that they have a high mate value and characteristics that make a mate more valuable, could also be characteristics that enhance confidence in one's abilities to succeed in competitive settings.

Previous studies have shown that intrasexual competitiveness varies between different contexts. For example, in the context of scarce selection in mating opportunities, people tend to be more intrasexually competitive, jealous, and aggressive toward potential rivals compared to when there is a perception of an abundance of possible mates (Arnocky et al., 2014). Thus, intrasexual conflict is thought to have evolved as an adaptive attitudinal and behavioral response, sensitive to the context of mate availability (Arnocky et al., 2014). In addition to being affected by certain contexts, studies have shown that specific personality traits are associated with high intrasexual competitiveness (Buunk et al., 2017; Buunk & Fisher, 2009). In both women and men, high levels of neuroticism predict intrasexual competitiveness. In women, low scores on measures of agreeableness have been associated with higher intrasexual competitiveness, whereas extraversion has been associated with intrasexual competitiveness in men (Buunk et al., 2017; Buunk & Fisher, 2009). However, according to the results of the present study, mate value discrepancy does not seem to be a context that would explain a considerable amount of the variance in intrasexual competitiveness, whereas intrinsic factors such as personality traits appear to explain more of the variance in intrasexual competitiveness than mate value discrepancy.

According to the results of the present study, men tended to be overall slightly more intrasexually competitive than women, which also contradicted my hypothesis, but the difference between the sexes was very small. Differences within the sexes were larger than

between the sexes. There was also a significant interaction between sex and mate value discrepancy, but the effect of mate value discrepancy on intrasexual competitiveness was very much alike for men and women.

A possible explanation for why the effects of mate value discrepancy on intrasexual competitiveness were quite small in the present study, is that the three groups that participants were divided into were based on a relatively insensitive measure. The magnitude of difference in mate value discrepancy within groups could not be included as a continuous variable in the analysis and therefore discrepancies of different magnitude (e.g., between -1 and -6) could not be taken into account in the results. Another important question is whether the self-assessment of one's mate value is a valid enough measure of mate value. A third-party assessor's evaluation might correspond better to the properties of mate value as a variable.

In the present study, age had a significant association with intrasexual competitiveness. Younger individuals were more intrasexually competitive, which was expected because individuals should, based on evolutionary theory, be more competitive to attract and retain mates during their most fertile years.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

One of the strengths of the current study is that it employed a large, population-based sample. This allows the results to be generalized to the adult heterosexual population in Finland. Another strength is the use of validated measurements and their high reliability.

A limitation of the present study is the impact of social desirability and whether the participants' responses reflect their genuine magnitude of intrasexual competitiveness and mate value discrepancy in the relationship. Being intrasexually competitive can be seen as a less socially desirable feature and therefore participants might underplay the magnitude of intrasexual competitiveness in their answers. Social desirability is the tendency of some respondents to report answers in a way that represents themselves in a more socially

acceptable way to prevent unfavorable evaluations by others. Social desirability can confound results and distort relationships among variables (van de Mortel, 2008). Although participants in the current study might have been affected by social desirability, the research was conducted online and anonymity of the participants was ensured, which in turn could decrease the motivation to respond in a socially desirable way.

Another limitation of this study is that the data were only collected from one partner in a relationship and that all of the measures were self-estimates. Because previous studies have shown that both partners are inclined to rate their partner with a higher mate value than themselves (Redlick, 2016; Sidelinger & McMullen, 2008), it would be ideal to collect data from both partners and an objective third-party estimate to acquire a more accurate picture of the relative mate value in the relationship. Research suggests that among women, third-party assessments are unrelated to self-rated attractiveness and that women typically overestimate their physical attractiveness (Brewer et al., 2007; Pereira et al., 2019), whereas in men self- and third party-ratings correlate positively (Pereira et al., 2019). Although a third-party rating would be optimal in the assessment of mate value of both partners in a relationship, it would be a very costly and time-consuming method in such a large population-based study. Pictures or descriptions of all the participants would be needed, which in turn would have a negative effect on the response rate, resulting in a much smaller sample size.

Although a large, population-based sample was used, the results in this study are only generalizable to heterosexual individuals as much of research in evolutionary psychology relies on reproductive aspects and the assumption that mating occurs mostly between a male and a female individual. Future research should examine the association between mate value discrepancy and intrasexual competitiveness in couples composed of more diverse sexual and gender identities.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this study contributes to a greater understanding of the association between mate value discrepancy, self-estimated mate value and intrasexual competitiveness. The statistical power in the study is high because of the large sample size, but the effect sizes were small.

The results in the present study indicate that individuals who perceive themselves as having a higher mate value than their partner, tend to be more intrasexually competitive in comparison with individuals who perceive themselves as having a lower mate value than their partner. According to the results of the present study, men who report that they have a high mate value are more intrasexually competitive than men who report that they have a low mate value. Younger individuals were more intrasexually competitive than older individuals and men were overall more intrasexually competitive in comparison with women.

Future research could examine what other factors could explain a greater amount of the variance in intrasexual competitiveness and explore the reasons why individuals who perceive themselves as the higher valued mate compared to their partner tend to be more intrasexually competitive.

Swedish Summary

Svensk sammanfattning

Sambandet mellan upplevd diskrepans i partnervärde och graden av intrasexuell tävlan hos heterosexuella individer

Inledning

Diskrepans, eller skillnad, i partnervärde är en viktig faktor som bland annat influerar en individs tillfredsställelse med sitt parförhållande (Conroy-Beam m.fl., 2016; Hromatko m.fl., 2015; Nowak & Danel, 2014), upplevda svartsjuka (Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2007) och kontrollerande beteenden inom parförhållanden (Danel m.fl., 2017). Partnervärde utgörs av alla de karaktäristika som främjar en lyckad reproduktion av en individ (Trivers, 1972) och omfattar både fysiska, psykiska och sociala aspekter som påverkar det individuella partnervärdet i en given kontext (Buss & Barnes, 1986; Lippa, 2007). Enligt Nowak och Danel (2014) kan diskrepansen i partnervärde i ett parförhållande vara en faktor, bland flera andra, som har en inverkan på ett pors välmående och därmed kunde det vara viktigt att ta i beaktande även i en klinisk kontext.

En individs partnervärde är ett mått på hur värdefull den personen skulle vara som partner i ett reproduktivt förhållande och hur attraktiv den personen skulle vara som en potentiell partner för personer av det motsatta könet² (Brase & Guy, 2004). Partnervärde består av individuella karaktäristika som påverkar en individs förmåga att hitta och behålla en partner samt särdrag som kunde potentiellt bidra positivt till en partners reproduktiva framgång (Waynforth, 2001). Fysisk attraktivitet, ungdomlighet och ett lågt förhållande mellan midja och höft (midjans omkrets delad med höftens omkrets) är de huvudsakliga

² I den här studien syftar ”kön” till biologiskt kön hos en sexuellt reproduktiv art (”könsidentitet” används då det i texten hänvisas till det kön individen identifierar sig med).

faktorerna som påverkar en kvinnas partnervärde, medan tillgång till resurser är den huvudsakliga faktorn som påverkar partnervärdet för män (Buss m.fl., 2000). Människor strävar efter att få en partner som har ett så högt partnervärde som möjligt, vilket är delvis beroende av individens eget partnervärde (Buston & Emlen, 2003).

Teorin om selektiv parning föreslår att individer dras till en partner som ”matchar” dem själva i partnervärde, särskilt när de inleder ett långvarigt förhållande (Buston & Emlen, 2003; Gangestad & Simpson, 2000). I en studie av Sidelinger och McMullen (2008) framkom att partnerna inom samma långvariga parförhållande tenderar att uppfatta att deras partner har ett högre partnervärde än dem själva. Trots denna tendens förekommer det långvariga parförhållanden som består av två personer som skiljer sig i betydande grad i partnervärde. Den upplevda diskrepansen i partnervärde har operationaliserats som diskrepans i partnervärde. Inom par där diskrepansen i partnervärde är stor, tenderar både partnern med det högre och partnern med det lägre partnervärdet att uppleva osäkerhet i relationen.

Forskare antar att orsaken till osäkerheten är olika för den partner som har ett lägre, jämfört med den som har ett högre, partnervärde (Buunk & Fisher, 2009). Enligt Buunk och Fisher (2009) är det möjligt att partnern som har ett lägre partnervärde bedömer att kostnaderna (exempelvis hypervigilans för rivaler och bevakning av partnern) att fortsätta förhållandet med en person av högre partnervärde överskrider fördelarna och väljer därmed att avsluta förhållandet. Däremot är det möjligt att partnern som har ett högre partnervärde överväger huruvida det är fördelaktigt för hen själv att förbli i ett förhållande samtidigt som det kunde finnas mer attraktiva och kompatibla partner tillgängliga. Sammanfattningsvis kan båda partner i förhållandet ifrågasätta sin vilja att fortsätta i ett förhållande med så stor diskrepans i partnervärde. Följaktligen erbjuder diskrepans i partnervärde prediktiv styrka om relativa beteenden mellan två partner i ett parförhållande, upplevd osäkerhet i parförhållandet och tillfredställelse med parförhållandet.

Enligt teorin om föräldrainvestering (Trivers, 1972), kommer det kön som investerar mer i sin avkomma att vara mer selektiv vid val av partner i jämförelse med det kön som investerar mindre och som därmed kommer att ha en högre grad av intrasexuell tävlan (tävlan mellan individer av samma kön om tillgången till potentiella partner). Kvinnor investerar minst nio månader i tid för en graviditet och efter det även en betydande mängd av fysiologiska resurser (exempelvis riskerna i samband med förlossningen samt amning efter förlossningen). För män kräver reproduktiv framgång en relativt liten minimal investering både i tid och fysiologiska resurser (som minst, en utlösning vid samlag). Även om kvinnors föräldrainvestering ofta är större än mäns, tenderar båda könen att investera i omsorgen av sina barn, och långvariga monogama förhållanden är allmänt förekommande. Därmed är båda könen kräsna i valet av en långvarig partner (Trivers, 1972).

Skillnaden i mängden av föräldrainvestering mellan könen anses vara motivet bakom de olika parningsstrategierna som könen tenderar att uppvisa. Enligt Trivers teori borde kvinnor föredra en partner som har möjlighet och är villig att förse barnet med mer än den minsta krävda mängden av föräldrainvestering (i form av sociala, psykologiska och materiella resurser), medan män borde anta en strategi som maximerar deras reproduktiva framgång genom att så ofta som möjligt åstadkomma en utlösning vid samlag. Buss (1988) använde sig av teorin om föräldrainvestering då han undersökte partnerattraktion och intrasexuell tävlan. Resultaten i studien tyder på att det finns könsskillnader i de intrasexuella strategier som individer använder då de försöker attrahera en partner och då de tävlar med rivaler av samma kön som de själva. Både män och kvinnor försöker få den bästa möjliga partnern, men de har olika preferenser beroende på vilka karaktäristika eller förmågor i en partner som maximerar avkommans sannolikhet att överleva. Därmed tävlar könen inom olika domäner för att attrahera en partner och tävlan sker endast mellan personer av samma kön (Buss, 1988; Kenrick m.fl., 1993, 1994).

Eftersom män prefererar en partner som med framgång kan bära, föda och vårda avkomman och som med låg sannolikhet skulle vara otrogen med andra män, försöker kvinnor förbättra och framföra sin fysiska attraktivitet för att framträda som friska, fertila, unga och mindre promiskuösa jämfört med andra kvinnor. Kvinnor, å andra sidan, prefererar en partner som kan förse dem och deras avkomma med resurser och trygghet, vilket är orsaken till att män tenderar att understryka sina resurser och sin förmåga att skapa trygghet samt demonstrera sin dominans och fysiska styrka (Buss, 1988).

Intrasexuellt tävlande definieras som tävlingen om tillgång till partner då man möter personer av samma kön (Buunk & Fisher, 2009; Buunk & Massar, 2012; Fernandez m.fl., 2019). Darwin (1871) observerade betydelsen av att besegra intrasexuella rivaler i tillfällen av upplevda parningsmöjligheter och föreslog att intrasexuellt tävlande utvecklades som en viktig anpassning av beteende för att maximera reproduktiv framgång.

Den individuella graden av intrasexuellt tävlande definieras som graden av rivalitet (inom partnertillgång) som en person uppfattar mellan sig själv och andra personer av samma kön. Graden av intrasexuellt tävlande har ett samband med både personlighetsfaktorer och omgivningsfaktorer (Welling & Shackelford, 2019). Nettle (2006) hävdade att individuella skillnader i personlighetsdrag kan vara adaptiva under vissa omständigheter. Att vara extremt intrasexuellt tävlingsinriktad kan vara fördelaktigt i vissa kontexter, men ofördelaktigt i andra kontexter. Att ha ett lågt partnervärde kunde vara en av de ofördelaktiga kontexterna. De rivaler som individen möter kategoriseras utifrån åtråvärdhet och den mängd hot individen uppskattar att de utgör för hans parförhållande (Maner m.fl., 2012). Aktiveringen av motiven som är relaterade till parning sker automatiskt och omedvetet (Maner m.fl., 2009; Massar & Buunk, 2010) och personer som lider av kronisk svartsjuka och relativt låg självkänsla tenderar att evaluera och behandla intrasexuella rivaler särskilt negativt (Agthe m.fl., 2011).

Det finns forskare som har forskat i antingen diskrepans i partnervärde eller i graden

av intrasexuell tävlan, men det finns en avsaknad av studier som skulle ha undersökt sambandet mellan dessa två specifika variabler. Därmed är syftet med den här studien att undersöka om ett sådant samband kan observeras. Utifrån tidigare forskning och teori inom ämnesområdet ställs hypoteserna:

1. Individer som anser sig själva ha ett lägre partnervärde jämfört med sin partner kommer att uppvisa en högre grad av intrasexuell tävlan, oberoende av kön, medan personer som anser sig själva ha ett högre partnervärde jämfört med sin partner kommer att uppvisa en lägre grad av intrasexuell tävlan.
2. Individer som anser sig själva ha ett högt partnervärde kommer att uppvisa en lägre grad av intrasexuell tävlan medan individer som anser sig själva ha ett lågt partnervärde kommer att uppvisa en högre grad av intrasexuell tävlan.
3. Inga signifikanta könsskillnader kommer att observeras.

Metod

Samplet i den här studien består i sin helhet av 4 848 vuxna tvillingar och syskon till tvillingar som deltagit i en finländsk populationsbaserad studie. Av dem var 3 237 kvinnor och 1 611 män. Enkäten som deltagarna fyllde i, består av olika frågor om exempelvis sexualitet, mental hälsa och relationer. Studien beviljades etiskt tillstånd av den forskningsetiska nämnden vid Åbo Akademi innan datainsamlingen påbörjades. Inbjudan till deltagandet i datainsamlingen skickades till de potentiella deltagarna under tidsperioden november 2018 till januari 2019 och den totala svarsfrekvensen för undersökningen blev 29 %. Dessa ursprungliga data bestod av svar från totalt 9 564 individer som bodde i Finland under den tid då datainsamlingen pågick och 97 % av de individerna gav samtycke för att deras data skulle användas för vetenskapliga syften.

I den här studiens sampel inkluderades alla de individer som hade besvarat frågorna om både intrasexuell tävlan och partnervärde samt de individer som rapporterat att de under studien var i ett varaktigt parförhållande och på frågan om sexuell läggning angett sig vara heterosexuella. Av dessa inkluderades endast de individer som rapporterat att deras könsidentitet överensstämmer med det kön som är markerat för dem i befolkningsregistret. Under datainsamlingen var deltagarnas ålder mellan 18 och 61 ($M = 30.48$, $SD = 8.22$). Alla de som inte uppfyllde inklusionskriterierna i studien exkluderades, vilket resulterade i ett sampel som bestod av 4 848 individers svar.

Den här studien delades in i två delar utgående från de två första hypoteserna, som prövades med två olika statistiska test och två olika sampelstorlekar. Sampelstorleken som användes för att pröva den första hypotesen (del ett av studien) bestod av 3 889 individer. Av dem var 2 512 kvinnor och 1 377 män. Sampelstorleken som användes för att pröva den andra hypotesen (del två av studien) bestod av 4 848 individer. Av dem var 3 237 kvinnor och 1 611 män. Den första sampelstorleken var mindre eftersom de potentiella ovidkommande effekterna av släktskap behövde kontrolleras för genom att endast inkludera en person per familj i analysen.

För att mäta deltagarnas grad av intrasexuell tävlan användes frågeformuläret "Intrasexual Competition Scale" (ISC) (Buunk & Fisher, 2009). Formuläret består av tolv frågor som mäter skillnader i intrasexuell tävlan som attityd. Skalan innehåller frågor som mäter önskan att överträffa personer av samma kön som en själv, känslor av avundsjuka och frustration när personer av samma kön som en själv klarar sig bättre, strävan efter att uppfatta sig själv som bättre än andra personer av samma kön och känslor av tillfredsställelse när högpresterande individer av samma kön som en själv förlorar ansiktet. Dessa fenomen skattas genom frågor som skildrar situationer eller kontexter i vilka man möter rivaler inom samma kön som en själv. För den här studien skapades två skilda summavariabler för intrasexuell

tävlan, en för kvinnor och en för män, eftersom frågorna är formulerade separat för de två könen.

För att skapa ett mått för diskrepans i partnervärde användes två frågor: Överlag, hur skulle du skatta din nivå av åtråvärdhet som partner jämfört med andra personer av samma kön? Om du har en partner, överlag, hur skulle du skatta din partners nivå av åtråvärdhet som en partner jämfört med andra personer av samma kön? Variabeln för diskrepans i partnervärde skapades genom att subtrahera deltagarens estimat av sin partners partnervärde från deltagarens självestimater av det egna partnervärdet. Därmed bestod värdet för diskrepansen i partnervärde endast av deltagarens uppfattning av sitt partnervärde och sin partners partnervärde. För att testa sambandet mellan diskrepans i partnervärde och den individuella graden av intrasexuell tävling, omkodade jag variabeln för diskrepans i partnervärde så att diskrepansvärdet för en person var antingen -1, 0 eller +1. Värdet 0 indikerar att det enligt deltagaren inte finns någon diskrepans i partnervärde, värdet -1 indikerar att deltagaren anser att partnern har ett högre partnervärde och värdet +1 tyder på att deltagaren anser att partnern har ett lägre partnervärde.

De statistiska analyserna genomfördes med programmet IBM SPSS (version 26). En faktoriell ANCOVA och ett GEE-test användes för att pröva hypoteserna. För huvudeffekterna genomfördes uppföljningstest med upprepade kontraster.

Resultat

I den första delen av studien, inom vilken kön inte togs i beaktande, hade diskrepans i partnervärde en liten men signifikant huvudeffekt på intrasexuell tävling. Individer som ansåg att de hade ett högre partnervärde jämfört med sin partner tenderade att uppvisa en högre grad intrasexuell tävling. Det här resultatet motsade min första hypotes. Alder hade ett signifikant samband med intrasexuell tävling. Yngre individer uppvisade en högre grad av intrasexuell

tävlan jämfört med äldre individer. Uppföljningstestens resultat visade att skillnaden mellan de individer som ansåg sig ha ett lägre partnervärde jämfört med sin partner och de individer som ansåg sig ha ett högre partnervärde var inte signifikant. Skillnaden mellan de individer som ansåg sig ha samma partnervärde som sin partner och de individer som ansåg sig ha ett högre partnervärde jämfört med sin partner var däremot signifikant.

Det fanns en liten men signifikant huvudeffekt av kön, vilket motsade min hypotes om könsskillnader. Män uppvisade överlag en högre grad av intrasexuell tävlan jämfört med kvinnor. Interaktionen mellan kön och diskrepans i partnervärde var signifikant, men effekten av diskrepans i partnervärde på intrasexuell tävlan var mycket lik för både män och kvinnor. Den största skillnaden mellan könen kunde observeras i gruppen där individer rapporterade en avsaknad av diskrepans i partnervärde. I gruppen där kvinnor upplevde en avsaknad av diskrepans i partnervärde, rapporterade de en lägre grad av intrasexuell tävlan jämfört med de två andra grupperna där kvinnor upplevde att de hade högre eller lägre partnervärde jämfört med sin partner. I den andra delen av den här studien hade endast männens uppskattning av sitt eget partnervärde ett positivt signifikant samband med intrasexuell tävlan. Även detta resultat motsade min hypotes.

Diskussion

Den här studiens syfte var att undersöka sambandet mellan diskrepans i partnervärde, självstimerat partnervärde och graden av intrasexuell tävlan. Enligt hypoteserna som ställdes förväntades det att de individer som anser att de har ett lägre partnervärde jämfört med sin partner, skulle uppleva en högre grad av intrasexuell tävlan och att de individer som anser att de har ett högt partnervärde, skulle uppleva en högre grad av intrasexuell tävlan jämfört med personer som anser att de har ett lågt partnervärde. Utifrån tidigare forskning, förväntades inga könsskillnader i graden av intrasexuell tävlan.

Resultaten i den första delen av den här studien visade att det fanns ett litet men signifikant samband mellan diskrepans i partnervärde och graden av intrasexuell tävlan. Individer som anser sig ha ett högre partnervärde i jämförelse med sin partner, tenderar att ha en högre grad av intrasexuell tävlan. Detta resultat motsade min första hypotes. Det är möjligt att personer med ett högt partnervärde kanske också innehar andra karaktäristika som bidrar till den höga graden av intrasexuell tävlan. Om man exempelvis är generellt i hög grad tävlingsinriktad, kunde man även uppleva en hög grad av intrasexuell tävlan (t.ex. kunde individer som är mer tävlingsinriktade kanske även ha en högre tilltro till sin förmåga och uppleva mer intrasexuell tävlan i olika situationer i jämförelse med mindre tävlingsinriktade personer). Mer generellt tävlingsinriktade personer tenderar kanske att anse att de har ett högt partnervärde och karaktäristika som gör en partner mer värdefull kunde även vara karaktäristika som ökar individens tilltro till de egna förmågorna att lyckas i olika slags tävlingssammanhang.

Resultat i tidigare forskning har visat att graden av intrasexuell tävlan varierar mellan olika kontexter. Exempelvis har en uppfattning av ett knappt utbud av parningsmöjligheter ett samband med en högre grad av intrasexuell tävlan, känslor av avundsjuka och aggressivitet mot rivaler jämfört med när individer upplever att det finns rikliga mängder av parningsmöjligheter. Intrasexuell konflikt är därmed både kopplat till attityder och beteende samt är sensitiv för kontexten av parningsmöjligheter (Arnocky m.fl., 2014). Förutom att graden av intrasexuell tävlan påverkas av den tillfälliga kontexten, indikerar forskning att vissa personlighetsdrag har ett samband med graden av intrasexuell tävlan. Bland både kvinnor och män har höga nivåer av neuroticism ett samband med graden av intrasexuell tävlan. För kvinnor predicerar även låga nivåer av vänlighet (eng. agreeableness) höga nivåer av intrasexuell tävlan hos individen, medan för män predicerar höga nivåer av extraversion höga nivåer av intrasexuell tävlan (Buunk m.fl., 2017; Buunk & Fisher, 2009). Enligt

resultaten i den här studien förklarar kontexten av diskrepans i partnervärde en mycket liten andel av variansen inom graden av intrasexuell tävlan, medan andra mer stabila särdrag inom individen som personlighet, verkar förklara en större andel.

Enligt resultaten i den här studien är män en aning högre i graden av intrasexuell tävlan jämfört med kvinnor, vilket även motsade min hypotes, men skillnaden är mycket liten och skillnaderna inom könen var större än mellan könen. Det fanns även en signifikant interaktion mellan kön och diskrepans i partnervärde men effekten av diskrepans i partnervärde på graden av intrasexuell tävlan var mycket lik för både män och kvinnor. En möjlig förklaring till varför effekten av diskrepans i partnervärde på graden av intrasexuell tävlan var ganska liten i den här studien, är att de tre grupper som deltagarna delades in i var baserade på ett relativt grovt mått. Graden av skillnad i diskrepans i partnervärde inom de olika grupperna kunde inte inkluderas som en kontinuerlig variabel i analyserna och därmed kunde inte diskrepanserna av olika grad tas i beaktande i resultaten. En annan viktig frågeställning är huruvida självskattningen av det egna partnervärdet är ett tillräckligt valitt mått för partnervärde. En utomstående persons bedömning av partnervärdet för en individ kunde överensstämma bättre med de attribut som partnervärde består av som en variabel i jämförelse med självskattning.

Ålder hade ett signifikant samband med graden av intrasexuell tävlan. Yngre individer upplevde en högre grad av intrasexuell tävlan i jämförelse med äldre individer, vilket var förväntat i och med att individer borde enligt evolutionsteori uppleva mer tävlan för att attrahera och behålla en partner under sina mest fertila levnadsår.

En av styrkorna i den här studien är den stora populationsbaserade sampelstorleken som gör det möjligt att generalisera resultaten till den vuxna heterosexuella populationen i Finland. Till studiens styrkor hör även att flera av de mått som användes var validerade och uppvisade hög reliabilitet. Till begränsningarna i denna studie hör att samplet endast bestod

av heterosexuella individer. För att kunna få resultat som går att generalisera till hela populationen, behöver man i fortsatt forskning sträva efter att inkludera individer av även andra sexualiteter. En annan begränsning är att alla de mått som användes i den här studien är självskattat och att svaren som användes i studien var uppskattningar av endast en partner i förhållandet. Eftersom resultat i tidigare studier (Redlick, 2016; Sidelinger & McMullen, 2008) har visat att båda partner i ett förhållande tenderat att skatta sin partner som högre i partnervärde kunde framtida forskning inkludera bedömningar av utomstående personer för att få ett mer objektivt mått på partnervärde. Forskning har visat att en utomstående bedömares uppskattning av attraktivitet inte har haft något samband med självskattad attraktivitet bland kvinnor och att kvinnor tenderar att överestimera sin attraktivitet (Brewer m.fl. 2007; Pereira m.fl., 2019). Bland män har utomstående bedömares evalueringar haft ett positivt samband med självskattad attraktivitet (Pereira m.fl., 2019). Däremot skulle det för den här studien ha varit mycket kostnads- och tidskrävande att inkludera bilder och beskrivningar av alla deltagare samt att rekrytera utomstående bedömare, vilket i sin tur skulle ha resulterat i en låg svarsfrekvens och sampelstorlek.

Sammanfattningsvis bidrar studien till en ökad förståelse av hur sambandet mellan diskrepans i partnervärde, självskattat partnervärde och graden av intrasexuell tävlan ser ut. Den statistiska styrkan i studien är hög tack vare det stora samplet men effektstorlekarna var små. Resultaten i studien visar att individer som upplever att de har ett högre partnervärde än sin partner tenderar att ha en högre grad av intrasexuell tävlan. Enligt resultaten i den här studien upplever män som rapporterar att de har ett högt partnervärde, en högre grad av intrasexuell tävlan i jämförelse med män som rapporterar att de har ett lågt partnervärde. Enligt resultaten upplever yngre individer en högre grad av intrasexuell tävlan i jämförelse med äldre individer och män upplever överlag en högre grad av intrasexuell tävlan i jämförelse med kvinnor. Framtida forskning kunde undersöka vilka faktorer som förklarar en

större andel av variansen för den individuella graden av intrasexuell tävlan och utforska orsaker till att personer som upplever att de har ett högre partnervärde än sin partner, tenderar att ha en högre grad av intrasexuell tävlan.

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PRESSMEDDELANDE

Skillnader i partnervärde verkar vara förknippat med den individuella graden av intrasexuell tävlan

Pro gradu-avhandling i psykologi

Fakulteten för humaniora, psykologi och teologi, Åbo Akademi

Resultaten från en pro gradu-avhandling vid Åbo Akademi tyder på att individer som anser sig ha ett högre partnervärde i jämförelse med sin partner, tenderar att uppvisa en högre grad av intrasexuell tävlan. Syftet med studien var att utforska sambandet mellan självskattad skillnad i partnervärde och graden av intrasexuell tävlan samt om könsskillnader kunde observeras. Resultaten i studien tyder även på att män uppvisar överlag en högre grad av intrasexuell tävlan jämfört med kvinnor, men skillnaden är mycket liten och skillnaderna inom könen var större än mellan könen. Resultaten indikerar dessutom att yngre individer uppvisar en högre grad av intrasexuell tävlan jämfört med äldre individer.

Deltagarna i studien bestod i sin helhet av 4 848 heterosexuella vuxna (3 237 kvinnor och 1 611 män) som deltagit i en finländsk populationsbaserad studie i vilken data hade samlats genom en nätenkät.

Det är viktigt att notera att inget orsakssamband har undersökts i studien, vilket innebär att man inte kan dra slutsatser om att skillnader i partnervärde skulle påverka graden av intrasexuell tävlan eller tvärtom. Framtida studier kunde undersöka vilka faktorer som förklarar en större andel av variationen inom skillnader i graden av intrasexuell tävlan och vilka orsaker som kunde finnas bakom att personer som upplever att de har ett högre partnervärde än sin partner, tenderar att uppvisa en högre grad av intrasexuell tävlan.

Avhandlingen utfördes av Elle Anthoni under handledning av Patrik Jern.

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