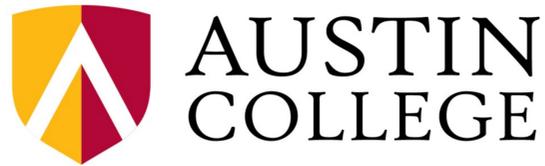


Introverts vs. Extroverts in Relationships



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Introduction

Individuals who exhibit the behavioral trait known as extroversion tend to be talkative, energetic and outgoing individuals, whereas introverts are more reserved and solitary people. These individuals exhibit very different behavioral traits and trends which correlate to their personal lives. These individuals may have different preferences within the boundaries of a personal relationship. Within the confines of a sexual relationship, these individuals may exhibit differences in their preference towards so called “casual hookups” or a sexual relationship which does not depend upon the emotional connection of two partners, versus committed monogamous sexual acts. Harris et al. (1980) suspected differences between introverts and extroverts in terms of imagery ability, which is connected with sexual arousability, but found no such differences. Schmitt’s (2004) study of risky sexual behavior and differential personality associations of sexual promiscuity and relationship infidelity across 10 cultures resulted in finding that the link between sexuality and extroversion appear to be culturally specific. Thus, the present study compared introverts and extroverts on mate and sexual preferences.

Method

Participants were recruited and we administered our survey through the Austin College psychology participant pool. Of the 270 potential participants, 226 responded to the survey, but after editing our data we only used 173 responses, because their responses did not create outliers or insufficient data. Participants were informed the purpose of the study was to relate personality types to sexual behavior and mate preferences, participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was assured. Administered was a survey that consisted of four sections:

1. Demographics
2. McCroskey Introversion Scale (McCroskey, 1982): 18 statements that participants had to rate using a Likert-scale of strongly disagree to strongly agree. These scores determined whether the participant was an introvert or an extrovert.
3. Mate Preferences Questionnaire (Buss, 2013): Two parts, the first was over mate preferences and the second was over mate characteristics. The first part contained 18 different factors for choosing a mate that were to be rated by participants on a scale of indispensable, important but not indispensable, desirable but not very important, and irrelevant or unimportant. The second part contained 13 different characteristics for what is desired in a mate that were to be ranked by participants from most desirable to least desirable.
4. Sexual Relationship Questionnaire: Thirty-one statements that participants rated using a Likert-scale of strongly disagree to strongly agree. The scoring of this instrument was that the 31 statements were divided into two subscales, adventurous and conventional, with scores determined by summing the individual items.

Hypotheses

- Hypothesis 1: There will be differences in mate preferences between introverts and extroverts.
- Hypothesis 2: There will be differences in sexual relationship subscales between introverts and extroverts.

Results

Table 1

MANOVA Table for Mate Preferences Ratings, Mate Characteristics Rankings, and Sexual Preferences Ratings.

Variable	Wilks's λ	F	df	p
Introversion Level	.762	1.21	32, 124	.23
Gender	.595	2.63	32, 124	< .001
Sexual Orientation	.676	1.86	32, 124	.009
Race	.718	1.52	32, 124	.06
Introversion Level * Gender	.798	0.98	32, 124	.51
Introversion Level * Sexual Orientation	.827	0.81	32, 124	.75
Introversion Level * Race	.792	1.02	32, 124	.45

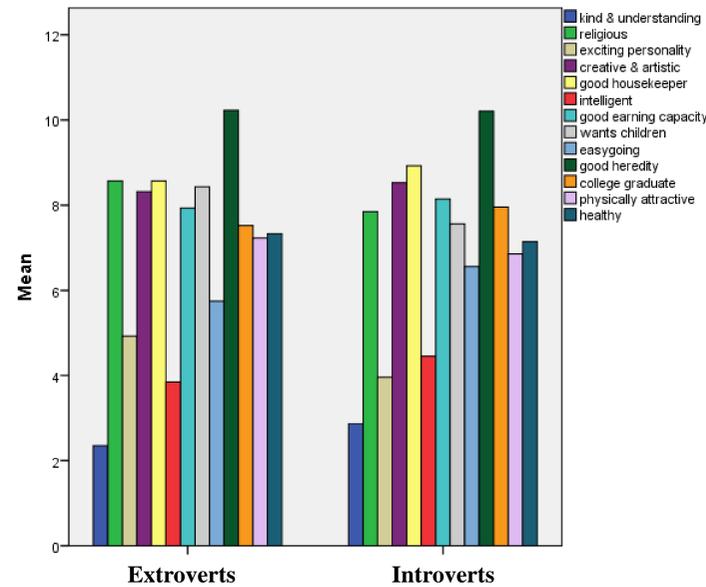


Figure 1. Bar graph showing the mean rank of characteristics sought in a mate for both introverts and extroverts.

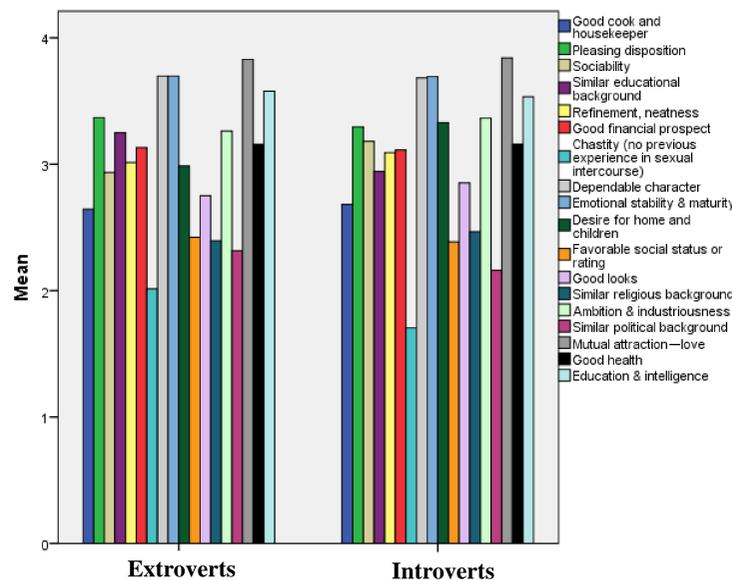


Figure 2. Bar graph showing the mean preferences sought in a mate for both introverts and extroverts.

Results

A MANOVA indicated significant effects based on participants’ gender (male vs. female; $p < .001$) and sexual orientation (hetero vs. non-hetero; $p = .009$). Race (White vs. non-White) approached significance ($p = .06$). The effect of introversion (high vs. low) was not significant ($p = .23$), nor were the interaction effects involving introversion (p ranged from .45-.75). Females rated emotional stability and maturity, good financial prospects, and ambition and industriousness higher in terms of preferences for their mate, while males rated good book and housekeeper, refinement/neatness, and chastity higher. Females ranked good earning capacity, desire for children, and having a college degree higher in terms of desired characteristics in their mate, while males ranked exciting personality, creative and artistic, and good housekeeper higher. Males also scored higher, on average, than females on the sexually adventurous scale. Students who identified themselves as heterosexual had higher ratings on desire for home and children, good looks, similar religious background, and good health in terms of preferences for their mate when compared to non-heterosexuals. Heterosexual students also ranked kind and understanding and intelligent higher in terms of desired characteristics in their mate.

Discussion

None of the 3 original hypotheses were supported by the results of this study. Conducting a MANOVA revealed significant differences between gender for both their mate characteristics/preferences and sexual attitudes. Cultural differences may have impacted our research, if we had been able to reach participants outside of the Austin College psychology participant pool due to the fact that the demographics of my results showed that Caucasian heterosexual females were the dominant participants. The biggest limitation is the small sample size that only includes participants who are students enrolled in a psychology course at Austin College. Increased amounts of contact between the researchers and the target sample may have led to a higher participation rate. In ideal circumstances the participants would have been more evenly distributed across the demographics of gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity. A larger sample with increased diversity would have benefited our results greatly. Some of the possible threats to the internal validity of our study are the quality of the instruments used to measure the variables and the attrition rate of participants starting the survey without completing it, therefore dropping out and affecting the results by lowering the amount of data available to work with. The Mate Preferences scale hasn’t been verified as reliable yet, so choosing an instrument with higher reliability could have been beneficial.

Future Directions

Our recommendations for further research into this topic would be to narrow the topic of the study down to one variable, such as sexual attitudes, to be compared between introverts and extroverts. Having fewer variables would increase statistical power and be more likely to detect small effects of introversion versus extroversion. We also recommend using the full version of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator to get a better assessment of introversion and extroversion. We recommend further studies be conducted before any major suggestions be made to the participants or any application in real-life be made, but we believe our findings of no differences between introverts and extroverts may make a case that dating between the opposing personality types will not have a negative effect on the relationship. Our study raises the question “What differences are there between introverts and extroverts, and how can these be found?”

References

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