Life History Theory and Mate Age Preference

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INTRODUCTION

Background

- Research on Life History Theory demonstrates there is a link between population density and the rate of life history.
  - Dense populations have a slower life history, characterized by later reproduction, emphasis on quality of child upbringing, education, less reproduction [1].
  - Less dense populations will have fast life history, characterized by younger reproduction, less individual care for offspring, less focus on education, and rapid reproduction [1].
- Life History Theory suggests reproduction within fast life history is comprised of younger females (for fertility) and older males (for commitment and financial security). In slow life history, this gap still exists, it is just less pronounced.

Purpose

- The study analyzed the connection between preferred mate age and population density of the town where participants' attended high school.

Predictions

- SUNY Oswego students should report in correspondence to the life history associated with their high school town, not that of Oswego (unless they attended an Oswego high school).

METHOD

Subjects.

- 72 psychology students (60 = female, 12 = male) participated through SONA.

Method.

- Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire. The participants completed several memory tasks, provided demographic information, and answered questions regarding prefered age of a partner and the zip code for the area they attended high school. The memory tasks were unrelated to this study and were not used.
- Demographic information and the answers to the two questions listed above are the only data used in this study. Population was divided by square kilometer to calculate density
- All questionnaires were completed online. No participants completed the study in a controlled lab setting.
- Population density was calculated based on the zip code provided.

RESULTS

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Unstandardized Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	-4.144	1.787		-2.319	.023
	denscen	-.002	.001	-3.863	-2.224	.029
	male	-5.477	1.818	-.955	-3.013	.004
	densXmale	-.002	.001	-3.983	-2.313	.024

a. Dependent Variable: agediff

- The General Linear Model (GLM) was used to identify if sex and density are accurate predictors of age preferences of a romantic partner.
- A regression was used to identify an interaction between either independent variable (IV) on the dependent variable (DV).
- The GLM produced significant results for sex, the regression was used to identify which sex was significant. ($p = .024$)
- IVs sex [female, male] and density had their means centered to 0 before conducting the regression.
- The regression identified that the significant interaction between sex and density on age was for males ($p = .029$)
- This test showed that men from areas with greater density reported preferences for younger women than men in less dense areas ($\beta = -.002$)
- There was no preference identified for women on age across all densities ($p = .16$).
- These data did not support the hypothesis, in fact, the data is significant in the opposite direction than predicted.

CONCLUSIONS

- Men from more dense areas reported preferences for younger women than men from less dense areas.
- Regardless of population density, women did not show a significance preference for older men.
- Life History Theory was not an accurate predictor of mate age preferences based on population density.
- The results of this study did not support the general predictions of Life History Theory.
- *Implications*
  - Based one the two regressions performed, women and men had unique slopes
  - Whereas men showed a significant increase in preference for younger women as density increased, women showed no such trend.
  - This study shows opposition for Life History Theory based on the data collected.
  - Future research should consider the possibility of not using Life History Theory as a predictor of future trends, but to explain previous fluctuations of population density and life history speeds.

REFERENCES

[1] Powerpoint on Life History Theory