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Reproductive Interests and Dimensions of Political Ideology

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Issues that relate to sex and reproduction are among the most hotly debated issues in modern politics. The debates surrounding same-sex marriage, abortion and the teaching of abstinence are cases in point. Research in political science and psychology suggests that individual positions on such issues reflect to a considerable degree individual differences in political ideology (see, e.g., Haidt & Hersh, 2001; Hout, 1999; Lakoff, 1996). Conservative individuals tend to oppose same-sex marriage and abortion and support abstinence. Liberal individuals, in contrast, tend to support same-sex marriage and choice in abortion and oppose the notion that pre-marital abstinence is the only justifiable decision.

This relationship between individuals' political ideology and their stance on sexual issues has been explained with reference to a large number of factors. It has been argued that differences on sexual issues emerge from differences in perceptions of whether certain acts are harmful (Turiel et al., 1991); that liberals and conservatives simply have different "cultures" regarding sexual relationships (Haidt & Hersh, 2001); that the relationship stems from religiosity and, hence, emerges because conservatives tend to be more religious than liberals (Olson et al., 2006); that liberals and conservatives differ in their understanding of the family (Lakoff, 1996); that liberals and conservatives differ in the openness to experience personality trait, and that this causes liberals to be more interested in everything "exotic," including in the sexual domain (Jost et al., 2008); that conservatives are motivated to engage in system-justification and hence, tend to support traditional gender roles and other such institutions (Jost et al., 2004); or that conservatives are more easily disgusted and therefore oppose sexual activity that feels "unnatural" (Smith et al., 2011; Tybur, et al., 2015). All these explanations are plausible, and most likely each of them contributes to understanding the link between political ideology and positions on sexual issues.

This manuscript advances a theoretical and empirical framework to address in more detail the psychological motivations behind the role of reproductive and sexual politics in the formation of ideology. It differs from existing arguments in that it takes attitudes about sexual issues at face value: Sexual attitudes are about sex. Hence, a number of recent psychological studies suggest that attitudes about sexual politics reflect to a significant extent self-interested concerns about sex and are related to differences in the sexual strategies people pursue (Kurzban et al., 2010; Weeden et al., 2008; Weeden & Kurzban, 2014). Here, I extend this perspective by arguing that because hierarchies—the core of politics—both constrain and advance the pursuit of sexual strategies, these differences are associated not just with people's attitudes on issues narrowly related to sex and reproduction, but with people's broader ideology.

This framework is potentially fully complimentary with the view that conservatives and liberals live in different "cultures," that liberals are more open to the experience of sex, and that liberals and conservatives have different perceptions of the family—but it pinpoints mating interests as a potential factor that binds these traits together and associates them with political ideology. More importantly, this framework opens for new insights: Being open to multiple sexual relationships is not a trait exclusive to liberals. On ideological dimensions relating to equality, the pursuit of sexual variety is associated with views closer to the conservative end of the spectrum.

Sociosexuality, Self-Interest and Ideological Dimensions

Psychological research has demonstrated that people consistently vary in so-called sociosexual orientation (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991). While many people pursue—or are attracted to—both

short-term romantic affairs and long-term committed relationships (Jackson & Kirkpatrick, 2007; Webster & Bryan, 2007), different people tend to prioritize one over the other at any given period. Some people tend to have a *restricted* orientation: They are attracted to long-term committed relationships and will only enjoy sex in that context. Other people have an *unrestricted* orientation and are attracted to short-term sexual encounters, finding pleasure in sex even if they do not love their partner. As a consequence, unrestricted individuals will search for a much higher number of sexual partners than will restricted individuals. Importantly, however, individual differences in sociosexual orientation does not just predict *how many* partners an individual seeks but also *who* the individual seeks as partner. Specifically, unrestricted individuals have stronger preferences for partners who are physical attractive, have sex appeal, social status and financial resources. In contrast, restricted individuals have stronger preferences for partners with strong parenting qualities (Simpson & Gangestad, 1992).

The gender of an individual is a consistent predictor of sociosexuality, in that males in general pursue more unrestricted strategies (Buss, 1989). Within-gender differences, however, are equally important. Individual differences in sociosexuality are relatively stable and are influenced by both genetic (Bailey et al., 2000) and developmental factors (Del Giudice & Belsky, 2011), but also change over the course of one's life history (Kruger & Fisher, 2008).

Differences in sexual strategies are expected to be politically important because people pursuing different strategies have different interests. Just as differences in interests on issues of redistribution (e.g., socioeconomic status) influence redistribution opinions (e.g., Doherty et al., 2006; Petersen et al., 2013) and differences in interests on issues of affirmative action (e.g., race) influence attitudes on affirmative action (e.g., Kluegel & Smith, 1983), we should expect differences in sexual interests to be politically consequential. This view has been supported in a number of recent studies. Weeden et al. (2008), for example, show that the strongest predictor of

religious service attendance in the United States is sexual behavior: Sexually unrestricted people are less likely to partake in religious services. Weeden and colleagues (2008) provide an interpretation of this effect that is oriented towards self-interest: Given the emphasis on committed relationships in most organized religions, unrestricted individuals have an interest in avoiding attending religious services because this would imply supporting a moral regime that runs counter to their interests. Similar effects have been shown with direct reference to political attitudes. Across a number of different countries, Kurzban and colleagues have shown that one of the best predictors of support for policies that ease the use of recreational drugs is sexual behavior, in that unrestricted individuals are more supportive of drug use (Kurzban et al., 2010; see also Quintelier et al., 2013). This effect of sociosexuality far outperforms the effect of, for example, political ideology. Again, this is explained with reference to interests. Unrestricted individuals are argued to favor policies that promote recreational drug use due to the strong linkage between intoxication and an increased likelihood of consenting to engage in sexual behavior.

Here, I extend previous research by suggesting that individual differences in mating strategies are not just associated with variation in policy attitudes on issues narrowly related to sex and reproduction. Rather, such differences are expected to relate to variation in individuals' positions on broader dimensions of political ideology. A key feature of all political ideologies is a conception of hierarchy: either a rejection of hierarchies, as in liberalism, or an endorsement of hierarchies, as in conservatism (see, e.g., Pratto et al., 1994). According to the literature on mating strategies, the existence of hierarchies has shaped the costs and benefits associated with particular strategies in, at least, two important ways: first, how many partners an individual is likely to obtain and, second, which traits available partners are likely to have. Individual

differences in sociosexuality influences preferences in both domains and, accordingly, it is plausible that individuals' broader ideological outlook is, in part, related to these differences in mating strategies.

The Costs and Benefits of Hierarchies

Hierarchies and norms of conformity have imposed costs on those following short-term mating strategies. Anthropological research shows that human decisions about mating have often been made or, at least, influenced by individuals other than those who are establishing the mating relationship. In particular, parents, close kin and elders have been observed to cross-culturally exercise control over the mating decisions of females and males without power (Apostolou, 2007; Flinn & Low, 1986). Of course, authorities do not universally exercise power over mating decisions. Both in many modern Western societies and in a select number of foraging societies, the mating partners make their own such decisions (Apostolou, 2007; Buunk et al., 2009). However, even within Western cultures, parents did until very recently play a crucial role in marriage decisions, and sometimes still do (Buunk et al., 2008). Hence, there is reason to expect that an evolved part of human mating psychology involves mechanisms for navigating the influence of elders and other authorities (Apostolou, 2007; Flinn & Low, 1986).

The existence of hierarchies in which individuals must conform to the decisions of elders and other authorities—rather than exercise free choice—is in particular a problem for those pursuing short-term mating strategies. Specifically, research shows that parents - consistent with their fitness interests in parent-offspring conflicts - seek to influence their offspring to opt for mates who are motivated to invest in family and cooperate with the ingroup (Buunk et al., 2008, 2009). In addition, the norms of traditional authorities across a variety of cultures emphasize

chastity and family values (see Tybur et al., 2016).¹ This could reflect, in part, the preferences of parents and, in part, attempts of elites to minimize mate-poaching and, hence, sustain the stability of their group. In any case, to the extent authorities influence the mating choices of individuals, this influence will limit an unrestricted individual's access to mates. Furthermore, in a moral regime that rests on traditional authorities and norms, the kinds of behavior that unrestricted individuals find attractive (e.g., sexual experience) are disincentivized and, hence, it will be more difficult for unrestricted individuals to find their ideal partner.

The human mind is clearly capable of entertaining different moral regimes with regard to the autonomy of individual decisions. Given this universe of possible moral regimes, the prediction from a mating strategic perspective is that those who pursue an unrestricted, short-term-oriented strategy are more likely to support regimes that emphasize freedom in choice of lifestyles and partners, seeking to condemn (i.e., increase the social costs of) the involvement of authorities in lifestyle decisions.

While lack of autonomy imposes costs on individuals who seek short-term mates, the establishment of another type of hierarchies, dominance hierarchies, involves benefits for those pursuing short-term mating strategies (Sidanius & Kurzban, 2013). First, dominance hierarchies - and one's place within it - can shape the number of available mates. It is a human universal that individuals—and in particular males—compete in order to attract mates and, in the context of this

¹ We can establish independent evidence of this by analysing the World Values Survey, a massive cross-cultural survey collected across the world in five-year intervals since 1980. For 149,373 participants from 45 countries, a measure of endorsement of restricted sexual strategies can be created. To assess whether elders across the world endorse such strategies, I correlated age with endorsement. In only one country, the association was significantly negative. In three countries, the association was non-significant. In 41 countries, the association was positive and significant. Across all participants and countries, the effect size of the association was $b = .26$, $p < .001$. When comparing the oldest to the youngest participants, these were, on average, 26 percentage points higher in endorsement of restricted sexual strategies (see Online Appendix Figure A1 for further details). At the same time, this analysis also reveals that there is cross-cultural variation in the degree to which elders oppose unrestricted strategies and, potentially, this could moderate the strength of the predicted SOI and RWA association. The fact that the analyses below find stronger effects in United States compared to Denmark could be a reflection of such culturally-specific calibration.

competition, establish dominance hierarchies (Sidanius & Pratto, 2001). More powerful and resource-rich individuals are better able to monopolize access to mates because they can dominate potential mates and competitors (e.g., via mate poaching). Hence, for those pursuing short-term mating opportunities, the need to secure status is crucial. Second, the existence of dominance hierarchies shapes the availability of the type of partners that unrestricted individuals prefer such as individual with high status and significant resources.

Given these observations, the prediction from a mating strategic perspective is that individuals pursuing an unrestricted, short-term mating strategy should support moral regimes that justify power inequalities. Importantly, from a mating strategic perspective, this should especially be the case among those who are powerful themselves, if such an effect reflects attempts of unrestricted individual to exploit dominance hierarchies to secure a high number of mates for themselves. For individuals pursuing committed strategies, in contrast, power inequalities pose a problem for individuals, and they are thus predicted to oppose such moral regimes for two reasons. Such inequalities have made such individuals vulnerable to mate poaching from dominant others (or even mate capture over substantial parts of human evolutionary history).

Hierarchies and Dimensions of Ideology

The degree of acceptance of authority involvement in lifestyle decisions and the degree of acceptance of dominance hierarchies correspond to two of the most important measures of political ideology: Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) and Social Dominance Orientation (SDO), respectively (see Duckitt et al., 2002; Thomsen et al., 2008). RWA reflects “beliefs in coercive social control, in obedience and respect for existing authorities, and in conforming to traditional

moral and religious norms and values” (Duckitt & Sibley, 2010: 1864). SDO reflects support for anti-egalitarianism and a desire to “dominate and be superior” (Pratto et al., 1994: 742).

In operational terms, the above discussion implies that an unrestricted sexual strategy is associated with *lower* RWA, but *higher* SDO. Some evidence in previous studies speaks to the validity of these predictions. For example, Buunk et al. (2009) showed that cross-national levels of parental involvement in mating decisions correlate with national levels of collectivism (a component of RWA) such that parents are more involved in collectivist societies. With regard to SDO, Pratto et al. (1994) have shown that SDO correlates positively with sexist attitudes (a component of a short-term mating orientation in males; Diehl et al., 2012).

While RWA and SDO were once viewed as personality dimensions, the consensus is now that they are better viewed as “two highly reliable, unidimensional, and well-validated measures of the two primary sociopolitical dimensions” (Duckitt & Sibley, 2010: 1866). Hence, within political science there is an increasing consensus that political ideology cannot be fully captured by a single ideological dimension from liberal to conservative. Instead, the ideological space of ordinary people is multi-dimensional (Feldman & Johnston, 2014; Treier & Hillygus, 2009). This is important because, as described in the introduction, research has linked attitudes in the sexual domain to political ideology in the sense of the liberalism-conservatism spectrum and, specifically, linked permissive attitudes the liberal side of the spectrum. Yet the present discussion suggests that the relationship is more nuanced. Specifically, people with an unrestricted sexual strategy are expected to be liberal as measured by RWA but conservative as measured by SDO. In this way, any general association between sexual views and overall liberalism or conservatism is expected to be much less robust than previously thought and, at the psychological level, to be only a partial reflection of a more much refined picture.

Hypotheses: Varieties of Mating Interests and Political Ideology

The core hypotheses are that individuals with an unrestricted mating strategy scores lower on RWA (Hypothesis 1, H1) and higher on SDO (H2) compared to people with a committed mating strategy. In the above, two different explanations from a strategic mating perspective were used to inform these predictions: first, how many partners an individual is likely to obtain and, second, which traits available partners are likely to have.

The first explanation invokes self-interest most blatantly, as it directly pertains to unrestricted individuals' abilities to accomplish their goals of acquiring multiple mates. Importantly, additional observable implications follow from this explanation. First, we should expect the existence of sex differences. As noted above, authorities have been more likely to exercise control over female than male mating choices (i.e., the higher parental investments among females do not just increase the pickiness of females directly but also of the parents influencing female choice). Hence, if effects of mating strategies on political ideology reflects self-interested attempts to maximize the number of partners among unrestricted individuals, it is plausible that the association between sociosexuality and RWA are stronger among females (H3). In contrast, it is equally plausible from this perspective that the association with SDO are stronger among males (H4). Competition for status in dominance hierarchies as a way to acquire mates is primarily a male strategy, as reflected in their higher general scores on SDO (Sidanius & Pratto, 2001). Finally, dominance hierarchies are only useful for acquiring mates for those who are in the top of them. Hence, from a blatant self-interest perspective, we should expect that the social status of an unrestricted individual conditions the association with SDO such that unrestricted individuals who are high in social status are especially likely to be high in SDO (H5).

The second explanation is a subtler version of the role of mating interests in politics. This second explanation does not focus on the difference between unrestricted and restricted individuals in their preference for the quantity of sexual partners. Instead it focuses on differences in the specific traits that they value in their partners and how moral regimes shape the availability of mates with such traits. As argued above, unrestricted individuals have stronger preferences for partners with sex appeal, who are sexually experienced and who have social status and financial resources. Importantly, partners with such traits are more likely to be available in regimes where authorities do not enforce sexual restraint and in regimes where dominance hierarchy are allowed such that high status can be pursued. To the extent this subtler role of mating interests explains the relationship between mating interests and political ideology, we should see that preferences in partner traits accounts for the association between sociosexuality and the RWA (in particular, preferences for sexually experienced partners; H6) and SDO (in particular, preferences for high-status partners; H7), respectively.

Research design

To provide a test of these predictions, I designed and collected two online web surveys that were fielded to nationally representative samples in Denmark ($n = 2,149$) and the United States ($n = 2,510$). Representativeness was achieved through quota sampling on gender, age, education and geography. The surveys were administered in the local language, i.e., Danish and English, respectively. The Danish version of original English survey items were existing translations or were translated by the author.

To test the predictions, the surveys were designed to capture the following measures: (1) a measure of my main independent variable: individual differences in mating

strategies; (2) measures of political ideology including RWA and SDO; and (3) measures of relevant control variables.

To measure individual differences in mating strategies, I follow Kurzban et al. (2010) and use the sociosexual orientation inventory (SOI) (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991), which is the standard measure of sociosexual orientation. Specifically, I used the seven questions suggested by Penke & Asendorpf (2008) from the original inventory, combining questions about sexual attitudes and sexual behaviors (see the Online Appendix A1 for specific items). Following the procedure of Simpson and Gangestad (1991), the answers to these items were summed to a reliable scale (Denmark: $\alpha = .65$; United States: $\alpha = .71$). The scale was subsequently recoded to vary between 0 and 1, with higher values corresponding to a more unrestricted sexual strategy. Due to the sensitive nature of the questions, we allowed people the option of refraining from answering them. As a result, we are left with a reduced set of respondents with valid values on the final scale (Denmark: 1,933; United States: 1,716).²

Different measures were utilized to measure the political ideology of the respondents. First, in both the United States and Denmark, respondents were asked to place themselves on a one-dimensional ideological scale from either liberal to conservative (in the United States) or from left to right (in Denmark). In both countries, respondents placed themselves on 7-point scales and the measure was recoded to vary between 0 (left/liberal) to 1 (right/conservative).

² This problem is limited in Denmark but significant in the United States. In the Online Appendix Table A6 and Table A7, I present additional analyses that investigate the causes and consequences of the drop-out in United States. The conclusions are (1) that the drop-out truncates the variation in SDO and, hence, most likely cause the strength of the association between SDO and SOI to be underestimated and (2) that the degree of drop-out varies substantially between SOI-item. Importantly, when analysing the association between each SOI-item and SDO (see Table A7), the main results reported in the main text replicate for each single item.

Second, to test the key predictions outlined above, the surveys also included ideological measures of RWA (Right-Wing Authoritarianism) and SDO (Social Dominance Orientation). To measure individual differences in RWA, six items from Altemeyer's (1996) RWA scale was included in the Danish survey. In the United States, eight items from the more recent RWA scale by Zakrisson (2005) were included (see the Online Appendix A1 for specific items). Answers to the items are summed together and scale ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating higher Right-Wing Authoritarianism. At the same time, it is important to note that the reliability of the scale was suboptimal in Denmark (Denmark: $\alpha = .58$; United States: $\alpha = .70$) and, furthermore, the reliability cannot be improved by dropping specific items. To address this problem, the Results section provides robustness analyses using structural equation modelling that allows for a better measurement of RWA as a latent scale (see Westfall & Yarkoni, 2016).

To measure individual differences in SDO, the surveys each included an SDO scale (see Online Appendix A1 for details). In the Danish survey, six items from Pratto et al.'s (1994) SDO6 scale was used. This scale, however, has been demonstrated to capture two distinct but interrelated dimensions referred to as egalitarianism (SDO-E) and dominance (SDO-D). Consequently, Ho et al. (2015) designed an improved SDO-scale that allows for capturing these two dimensions. In the American survey, the scale from Ho et al. (2015) was used. As consequence, in an American survey the scales used allows for the construction for SDO-E and SDO-D, in addition to an overall SDO scale. In all cases, answers were summed into scales with acceptable reliability (Denmark: $\alpha_{\text{SDO}} = .70$; United States: $\alpha_{\text{SDO}} = .84$, $\alpha_{\text{SDO-E}} = .78$, $\alpha_{\text{SDO-D}} = .68$). All scales range from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating higher Social Dominance Orientation.

To test whether and how the associations between SOI and the dimensions of political ideology are moderated by the social status of the individual, the Danish survey included

two measures. First, using the MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status (Adler et al., 2000), respondents were asked to place themselves on a 10-point scale from low to high social status. Second, to allow for a test that more directly related to mating-relevant resources, respondents were also asked to place themselves on a 10-point scale from low to high mate value (see Online Appendix A1 for question wording).

To test whether and how preferences for particular traits in mating partners shape any associations between SOI, on the one hand, and RWA and SDO, on the other, the respondents were presented with 14-item battery, designed to measure how the attractiveness of partners vary along a broad range of trait dimensions: whether the partner is (1) seeking commitment, (2) faithful, (3) sexually experienced, (4) wealthy, (5) ambitious, (6) family-oriented and (7) physically attractive (see Online Appendix A1 for full question wordings). Two items per trait was used and these items were summed together and recoded to vary between 0 and 1.

As part of the survey, I also measured a set of key control variables: respondent's gender, age, race (only in the United States), level of religiosity, education and whether the respondent was currently in a stable relationship or not. This is our core set of control variables. In addition, the US survey included a broader set of measures designed to tap psychological measures that have previously been argued to be related to the link between political ideology and sexual attitudes, such as openness to experience (Jost et al., 2008) and disgust sensitivity (Tybur et al., 2015). Specifically, respondents were questioned on an encompassing measure of personality (including openness) as measured by Mondak et al.'s (2010) Big Five TIPI scale, and completed Tybur et al.'s (2009) pathogen disgust scale. In addition, to control for processes related to partisan reasoning, we included a measure of party identification. It should be noted that the causal order between these extended control variables and the key independent and dependent

variables is ambiguous and, hence, their inclusion involves the risk of creating post-treatment bias in the estimates. That said, to the extent that the predicted associations are relatively robust to their inclusion, it strengthens the present argumentation.

All variables except age were recoded to vary between 0-1. Due to the metric nature of both independent and dependent variables, all analyses were done using OLS regression. It is not fruitful to insist on a clear direction of causality between SOI and our measures of ideology; following Jost et al.'s (2009) discussion of the correlates of ideology, it is better to conceptualize any association as a reflection of an "elective affinity." For practical purposes, however, SOI is specified as the dependent variable and I estimate models that include both RWA and SDO (or the other ideological measures) as independent variables. In this way, the effect of RWA can be controlled for SDO and vice versa and, hence, make sure to estimate the unique association between SOI and each of the two ideological dimensions.³

- Figure 1 about here -

- Table 1 about here -

Results

Table 1 displays the associations between the measures of political ideology and SOI, including the range of control variables. The effect sizes (unstandardized regression coefficients) with associated confidence intervals are summarized in Figure 1.

³Appendix Table A1 in the Online Appendix presents an alternative modelling of the associations with the ideological dimensions as the dependent variables. These models sustain the same conclusion as Table 1 in the main text. To correct for the associations between SDO and RWA, these alternative models include the other ideological dimensions when estimating the effect of SOI.

Are SOI related to overall political ideology across cultures? The first set of analyses asks whether an unrestricted sexual strategy is associated with political liberalism. This is the standard expectation, but the present results show that this association is small and not cross-culturally robust. As revealed in Model 1, Table 1, there is no association between ideological self-placement and SOI in Denmark ($b = -.01$, $p = .52$). In contrast and consistent with previous research, there is a small significant association between self-placement and SOI in the United States ($b = -.05$, $p < .001$), such that people with an unrestricted strategy are more likely to self-identify as liberals. This pattern of data reveals that the association between sexually permissive strategies and political liberalism is less robust than previously thought. In light of the argument advanced here, this is not surprising. Because sexual strategies are expected to be associated with the underlying components of ideology in opposite ways, any overall correlation between such strategies and political ideology should be small and fluctuating.

Are SOI and RWA negatively related across cultures (H1)? In the next set of analyses, we turn towards testing the core predictions of how sexual strategies and the dimensions of ideology are related. Figure 1 displays the key effects, and the underlying models are presented in Table 1, Models 2 and 3. As predicted, in both Denmark and the United States, RWA and SOI (Denmark: $b = -.08$, $p = .008$; United States: $b = -.25$, $p < .001$) are significantly negatively related, such that people pursuing an unrestricted strategy are attracted to the liberal end of this dimension and, hence, more likely to oppose authorities' influence on life choices. At the same time, it is important to emphasize that the effect size in Denmark is small. This could reflect that the reliability of the RWA scale is low and, in Denmark, below the conventional threshold. To account for this, I have repeated the analyses but utilized structural equation modelling and specified RWA (and SDO) as a latent trait, which decreases measurement error. Reassuringly, these model

replicates and strengthens the association between RWA and SOI (standardized regression coefficients: Denmark: $\beta = -.15$, $p = .007$; United States: $\beta = .36$, $p < .001$; note that high values on the latent RWA trait is equal to low RWA in the US model). Furthermore, it is relevant to ask whether the predicted effects are robust to the inclusion of key control variables. Models 2 and 3 in Table 1 control for a basic but important set of control variables such as gender and religiosity. In the United States, there was an even more extensive set of control variables available. These are included in the analyses presented in Model 4. As can be seen, even when controlling for crucial personality traits such as openness to experience and disgust sensitivity, we find that the predicted associations between SOI and RWA (after control: $b_{\text{RWA}} = -.22$, $p < .001$). Thus, there is considerable cross-cultural support for H1.

Are SOI and SDO positively related across cultures (H2)? As predicted, in both Denmark and the United States, the association between SDO and SOI is positive and significant (Denmark: $b = .10$, $p < .001$; United States: $b = .09$, $p = .002$), such that people with an unrestricted sexual strategy are attracted to the conservative end of this dimension and, hence, more likely to support unequal distributions of resources and power. As can be seen from Model 4, this association is robust when controlling for a wider range (after control: $b_{\text{SDO}} = .09$, $p = .026$). While this constitutes support for H2, it is important to note that the effect sizes are low. This could reflect measurement error of the SDO scale, as the scale reliability was just acceptable in Denmark. But this could also reflect the fact that SDO is, as noted in the Methods section, a two-dimensional construct that refers to both preference for egalitarianism and preferences for dominance. To address the issue of reliability, I report coefficients from structural equation models wherein SDO (and RWA) was specified as latent traits. In both Denmark and United States, these models showed increased associations between SOI and SDO (Denmark: $\beta = .18$, $p < .001$; United States: β

= -.16, $p < .001$; note that high values on the latent SDO trait is equal to low SDO in the US model). To discern between egalitarianism and dominance, I utilize the sub-scales of SDO-E and SDO-D from the American survey. Interestingly, analyses show that the association between SOI and SDO is specifically driven by SDO-D ($b = .14$; $p < .001$) rather than SDO-E ($b = .05$; $p = .16$) (see the Online Appendix Table A2). When SDO-D is modelled as a latent trait using structural equation modelling, the strength of the association is sizeable ($\beta = -.21$, $p < .001$; note that high values on the latent SDO trait is equal to low SDO in this model). Hence, there is also cross-cultural support for H2 but, importantly, the effect seems to be exclusive for SDO-D, i.e., the dominance dimension of SDO (I return to this in the conclusion). Furthermore, the size of the association between SDO and SOI is generally small, unless the analyses focuses specifically on SDO-D and corrects for measurement error.

Are the associations between SOI and the ideological dimensions conditioned by sex (H3-4)? As argued in the theory section, females are particularly likely to be the target of elders attempts at influencing mate choice and males are particularly likely to compete for status in order to attract mates. As consequence, it was predicted that the association between SOI and RWA should be stronger for females (H3), while the association between SOI and SDO could be stronger for males (H4). Online Appendix Table A3 tests whether the associations between SDO and RWA, on the one hand, and SOI, on the other hand, are moderated by the gender of the participant. Overall, the analyses are inconclusive. In Denmark, the associations between SOI and RWA and SDO, respectively, are indeed significantly moderated by gender. For females, the negative association between SOI and RWA are higher than for males ($b = -.12$, $p = .02$) while the positive association between SOI and SDO are lower ($b = -.11$, $p = .02$). In Denmark, in others words, the association between RWA and SOI is stronger for females, whereas the association

between SDO and SOI is stronger for males. Yet, in United States, none of these moderating effects can be replicated ($p=.41$ and $p=.40$, respectively). This is also the case when the analyses focus specifically on SDO-D ($p=.24$). Hence, overall, H3 and H4 only receive very limited support.

Is the association between SOI and SDO by the individuals' social status (H5)? Online Appendix Table A4 tests whether the ideological associations of SOI are conditioned by participants' own placement in the hierarchy of society or the participants' mate value. As noted above, these measures were only available in Denmark. As revealed in Table A3, neither the association between RWA and SOI ($b = .05$, $p = .72$) nor the association between SDO and SOI ($b = -.02$, $p = .86$) is moderated by subjective social status.⁴ Furthermore, neither the association between RWA and SOI ($b = -.09$, $p = .50$) nor the association between SDO and SOI ($b = -.04$, $p = .73$) is moderated by the individuals' self-perceived mate value.⁵

Is the association between SOI and ideological dimensions accounted for by preferences for specific traits in mates (H6-7)? In the Danish survey, measures were included to operationalize seven specific traits that one could value in a potential mate. To test whether these trait preferences - and which of them - accounts for the associations between SOI and RWA and SDO, respectively, the decomposing method developed by Kohler, Karlson & Holm (2011) is utilized. The models tested is equivalent to Table 1, Model 2 but, in a second step, includes the measures of the trait preferences. The analyses show that the inclusion of the trait preferences removes the association between SOI and both RWA (after control: $b=-.02$, $p=.54$) and SDO (after control: $b=.02$, $p=.32$). Furthermore, this decrease in the associations is significant in both the case of RWA ($b=-.06$, $p<.001$) and in the case of SDO ($b=.07$, $p<.001$). This suggests that differences in trait preferences

⁴ In United States, there was a measure available that is conceptually related to perceptions of social status, namely perceived childhood and present socio-economic status (using measures by Griskevicius et al., 2013). Neither measure moderated the association between SOI and SDO or SDO-D, respectively (see Online Appendix Table A5).

⁵ Exploratory analyses presented in the Online Appendix Table A4 asked whether these interaction effects could be observed when focusing exclusively on males, as the association between SOI and SDO was stronger in Denmark for males. This was not the case.

between people following restricted and unrestricted strategies does, in fact, account for the association between these strategies and the dimensions of political ideology.

- Insert Table 2 here -

Table 2 shows how much each of the specific trait preferences contributes to the association between SOI and RWA and SDO, respectively. As seen, the association between SOI and RWA is accounted for by variation in preferences for mates that are faithful, looking for a committed relationship and sexually inexperienced. Individuals high in SOI finds these traits unattractive compared to their opposites (i.e., promiscuous and sexually experienced individuals looking for short-term relationships) and this accounts for their opposition against a moral regime that emphasize the power of traditional authorities. This is consistent with H6. The association between SOI and SDO is accounted for by variation in preferences for mates that are looking for a committed relationship, are wealthy and are faithful. Hence, it is unrestricted individuals' preferences for high status short-term partners that lead them to endorse dominance hierarchies, which make such partners available. In this regard, the lack of effect for ambitious partners is instructive: the SOI-SDO link is specifically generated by preferences for partners that are presently high status (rather than partners projected to be high status in the future), which underscores the importance of a short-term mating orientation. Similarly, while SOI is related to preferences for attractive partners, this preference does not facilitate the association with SDO, as dominance hierarchies does not regulate the availability of such partners. Essentially, there will be attractive

individuals in all groups, whether or not they are hierarchical or egalitarian. Overall, these findings are consistent with H7.⁶

Conclusions

The present analyses provide evidence that individual differences in sexual strategies are associated with individuals' positions along dimensions of political ideology. Individuals who pursue multiple, short-term sexual encounters are lower in authoritarianism than individuals pursuing fewer, long-term oriented relationships. Hence, sexually unrestricted individuals tend to support political and moral regimes that bestow autonomy on the individual when making lifestyle choices. At the same time, however, individuals who follow a short-term sexual strategy are simultaneously higher in social dominance orientation than those following a long-term strategy. Hence, sexually unrestricted individuals tend to also support political and moral regimes that allow and justify inequalities in power and resources.

Where this study emphasizes mating interest, previous accounts of the relationship between ideology and sexual politics have emphasized a range of other predispositions, including conceptions of the family and openness to experience. While these other factors are important—and likely related to differences in sexual strategies—the present results run counter to these previous accounts in one important respect. Previous accounts consistently relate permissive sexual attitudes to liberalism. The present results suggest that this relationship only holds to a

⁶ As demonstrated above, the association between SDO and SOI is only significant among males in Denmark, whereas the association between RWA and SOI is only significant among Danish females. For males, the association between SDO and SOI are driven exclusively by variation in preferences for partners (a) seeking committed relationships (45 %, $b = .04$, $p = .003$) and (b) with high social status (34 %, $b = .03$, $p = .01$) (after control: $b = .07$, $p = .08$; difference $b = .08$, $p = .002$). For females, the association between RWA and SOI are driven by the same factors as in the overall sample, i.e., variation in preferences for partners (a) seeking committed relationships (27 %, $b = -.02$, $p = .01$), (b) who are faithful (33 %, $b = -.03$, $p = .003$), and (c) sexually experienced (32 %, $b = -.03$, $p = .003$) (after control: $b = -.06$, $p = .12$, difference: $b = -.08$, $p < .001$).

limited extent. Hence, a crucial part of having permissive sexual attitudes is related to being socially dominant, a key driver of conservatism (Pratto et al., 1994). Accordingly, the relationships that have been uncovered here cannot be explained with reference to liberals being more open to experience or more pleasure-seeking. In this way, the relationship between sexual attitudes and general ideological leaning is shaped by a broader range of considerations than has previously been recognized. These considerations lead people to opt for those components of both liberal and conservative ideologies that strategically conform to their reproductive interests.

While the core predictions were empirically supported, several important qualifying observations emerged in the course of the analyses. First, it is important to note that the absolute strength of these associations varies, depending on modelling strategy, between .08 and .36 and, hence, should be considered small. Complex social traits such as the endorsement of moral regimes relating to societal authorities and hierarchies are obviously shaped by a very large range of factors beyond mating considerations. For example, we should expect that any interest, not just mating interests, that run counter to the interests of traditional authorities generates moral opposition to the influence of such authorities. At the same time, it is important to note that the strength of these associations does rival some associations that have been considered important correlates of mating strategies in past work such as religiosity (see Table 1; cf. Weeden et al., 2018). It should also be noted that care was taken to increase the external validity of the findings by relying on nationally representative surveys in two different countries. Often university undergraduates are used as research participants in psychological science and, compared to this group, participants in representative surveys less experienced in research participation and complete the survey under much less controlled conditions. As consequence, measures will often have more measurement error, which will decrease the observed strength of associations.

Second, the association between SDO and SOI seems to be specific for the dominance component of SDO (SDO-D) and, hence, SOI seems to be unrelated to the egalitarianism component of SDO (SDO-E). This suggests that SOI is associated with preferences for the direct, active and sometimes violent competition and domination between groups that lies at the heart of SDO-D, rather than support for the "subtle hierarchy-enhancing beliefs and social policies" that lie at the heart of SDO-E (Ho et al., 2015: 3). This could reflect the fact that mating competition over human evolutionary history, especially for males, has been a key selection parameter for the evolution of aggressiveness and physical strength (Puts, 2010).

Third, two possible mechanisms for the association between SOI and dimensions of political ideology were hypothesized and only one was empirically supported. On the one hand, unrestricted individuals might oppose traditional authorities and endorse dominance hierarchies in order to directly increase their own mating success in terms of the number of partners. On the other hand, unrestricted individuals might oppose authorities and endorse dominance hierarchies because partners with their preferred traits (promiscuous and of high status) are more likely to be available under these circumstances. According to this second explanation, mating interests shapes political ideology in a subtle, more indirect way. Overall, the analyses were consistent only with this explanation and preferences for particular traits in partners constituted the link between SOI and dimensions of political ideology. One important finding in this regard was that SOI and SDO was not more positively related for individuals with high social status. From a purely economic or rationalistic perspective, only individuals high in social status (either presently or expectedly) should be supportive of dominance hierarchies. But the present findings show that mating interests push against this relationship. Hence, individuals following an unrestricted mating strategy are motivated to support dominance hierarchies, independently of their social status.

While evolutionary perspectives are increasingly common in the study of politics (Petersen, 2015), a perspective on sexual issues that emphasizes self-interest is not—despite the fact that self-interest is routinely discussed in analyses of, for example, redistribution and affirmative action. The present results speak to these broader discussions of the role of self-interest. Some have provided evidence that differences in self-interest are only minimally relevant for understanding differences in political attitudes (e.g., Kinder & Sears, 1981; Sears et al., 1980; Sears & Funk, 1990); others have provided evidence to the contrary (e.g., Brunner et al., 2011; Doherty et al., 2006; Franko et al., 2013; Petersen et al., 2013). Importantly, however, these analyses have almost exclusively focused on economic or identity-based interests. According to an evolutionary perspective, however, people have a much broader set of interests that shape their political views (Weeden & Kurzban, 2014; Petersen, 2015). According to the present analyses, one important set of interests is sexual in nature.

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Table 1. Associations of Ideology and Sociosexual Orientation in Denmark and the United States.

Sample	Denmark		United States		
Model	1	2	3	4	5
Ideological Self-Placement (Conservative)	-0.01 (0.02)	-	-0.05*** (0.01)	-	-
Right Wing Authoritarianism (RWA)	-	-0.08** (0.03)	-	-0.25*** (0.04)	-0.23*** (0.04)
Social Dominance Orientation (SDO)	-	0.10*** (0.03)	-	0.11** (0.04)	0.09* (0.04)
Gender: Female	-0.11*** (0.01)	-0.10*** (0.01)	-0.10*** (0.01)	-0.10*** (0.01)	-0.09*** (0.01)
Age	-0.00*** (0.00)	-0.00*** (0.00)	-0.00** (0.00)	-0.00* (0.00)	-0.00* (0.00)
Race: White	-	-	0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Religiosity	-0.09*** (0.02)	-0.08*** (0.02)	-0.11*** (0.01)	-0.10*** (0.01)	-0.09*** (0.01)
Education	-0.04** (0.01)	-0.04** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)	0.02+ (0.01)
Stable Relationship: No	0.09*** (0.01)	0.09*** (0.01)	0.02** (0.01)	0.02** (0.01)	0.02*** (0.01)
Openness to Experience	-	-	-	-	0.06** (0.02)
Conscientiousness	-	-	-	-	-0.02 (0.02)
Extroversion	-	-	-	-	0.09*** (0.01)
Agreeableness	-	-	-	-	-0.06** (0.02)
Neuroticism	-	-	-	-	-0.03+ (0.02)
Pathogen Disgust Sensitivity	-	-	-	-	0.02 (0.02)
Party Identification: Republican	-	-	-	-	-0.02+ (0.01)
Party Identification: Democrat	-	-	-	-	0.00 (0.01)
Party Identification: Other	-	-	-	-	-0.02 (0.01)
Constant	0.44*** (0.02)	0.41*** (0.02)	0.41*** (0.01)	0.50*** (0.03)	0.46*** (0.04)
N	1909	1909	1705	1710	1635

R^2	0.140	0.147	0.263	0.277	0.300
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Notes. Entries are unstandardized OLS regression coefficients. Standard errors are reported in parentheses. All variables except age have been recoded to vary between 0 and 1. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, p-values are two-tailed.

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Table 2. Decomposing the Association Between SOI and SDO and RWA.

Ideological Dimension	Association with SOI	Contribution of Specific Preferences for Partner Traits						
		Seeking Commitment	Faithful	Sexually Experienced	Wealthy	Ambitious	Family-Oriented	Physically Attractive
RWA	Uncontrolled: b = -.08** Controlled: b = -.02 Difference: b = -.06***	29 % -.02* (.007)	40 % - .02** * (.006)	20 % -.01** (.004)	4 % -.00 (.002)	8 % -.00 (.004)	1 % -.00 (.001)	-2 % .00 (.003)
SDO	Uncontrolled: b = .10*** Controlled: b = .02 Difference: b = .07***	44 % .03*** (.007)	18 % .01** (.004)	4 % .00 (.002)	25 % .02** (.006)	6 % .00 (.003)	5 % .00 (.002)	-1 % -.00 (.002)

Notes. N = 1909. The decomposition was performed with the method developed in Kohler, Karlson & Holm (2011). The column "Ideological dimension" specifies whether the rows focus on the association between SOI and SDO or RWA, respectively. "Association with SOI" specifies the association before control for trait preferences (Uncontrolled), after control (Controlled) and the difference in the associations before and after. The columns under "Contribution of specific preferences for partner traits" specify how large a percent of the difference in the association that is attributable to each of the trait preferences; for each trait the following is reported: the percentage, the coefficient of the indirect relationship, the significance level and the standard error in parentheses. Cells with significant effects are in bold. All models are controlled for participants' gender, age, education, religiosity and whether they live in a stable relationship. Note that the method cannot determine whether the reduction in the association reflects spurious or indirect effects. * p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Figure 1. Associations of Ideology and Sociosexual Orientation in Denmark and the United States.

Notes. Bars display unstandardized regression coefficients with associated 95% confidence intervals. Coefficients are based on Table 1.