An Exploration of Attraction Stereotypes and Self-Reported Attraction Priorities across Diverse Groups

by

Krista Quinn

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Author's Declaration

This thesis consists of material all of which I authored or co-authored: see Statement of Contributions included in the thesis.

This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners. I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Statement of Contributions

I developed the study designs in collaboration with Dr. Neil Hester. I conducted data collection with the assistance of research assistants from the Impressions Lab at the University of Waterloo; Junell Antwi, Safa Barlas, Vanessa Basbas, Zoe Cushman, Syrus Koetke, Robert Mackey, and Yiqiu Wang. Data was analyzed by me with guidance from Dr. Hester. All drafts of the thesis were primarily written by me, with Dr. Hester providing edits and input.

Abstract

Psychologists have identified several characteristics that impact judgments of attraction, including physical appearance, personality, earning potential, and social status. Prior research has focused on evaluating self-report judgments of which factors people prioritize when selecting partners, but less work has investigated the attraction stereotypes that people hold, which we define as beliefs about specific groups' priorities when evaluating a partner. Furthermore, past literature has focused on gender differences, yet lacks diversity and is influenced by a cisnormative, heteronormative bias. The present work ventures to examine how people's perceptions of others' partner priorities are affected by targets' unique intersectional identities. University (N=214) and online (N=436) samples — featuring straight, bisexual, and gay men and women — provided stereotype ratings of ten traits for judging attractiveness for six gender-by-sexuality groups, as well as self-report ratings of these traits' importance when choosing their own partners. We describe attraction stereotypes across gender-by-sexuality groups, examine how these patterns are moderated by type of rating (stereotype vs. self-report), and evaluate how discrepancies between these types of ratings differ according to perceiver identity.

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And to my Mom. There's nothing I accomplish without wishing you were here to see it. Thank you for showing me the kind of woman I want to be. I pursue all my goals in a way that I hope makes you proud, taking the time to approach life with love, even during the lows, and always celebrating the wins for myself and those of all the people I love.

Dedication

For the 18-year-old me, the Krista who was unsure she would graduate from university because it all seemed too difficult to overcome, thank you for deciding we could do it.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Finding a romantic partner poses a lot of challenges, not the least of which is understanding what other people find attractive. In the absence of concrete knowledge about the individual's specific preferences and traits, many individuals resort to stereotypes about attraction preferences as a strategy to mitigate this uncertainty. But what does one base these stereotypes on, who tends to endorse these stereotypes, and do they believe these stereotypes hold relevance for their own attraction experiences?

Within the sphere of social psychology, a number of characteristics have been investigated for their impact on attraction, such as physical appearance (Eastwick & Finkel, 2008; Emond & Eduljee, 2014; Luo & Zhang, 2009; Najman et al., 2006; Nevid, 1984; Regan et al., 2000; Russock, 2011; Sprecher, 1989), personality (Botwin et al., 1997; Emond & Eduljee, 2014; Regan et al., 2000), earning potential (Eastwick & Finkel, 2008; Li & Kenrick, 2006; Najman et al., 2006; Russock, 2011; Sprecher, 1989; Sprecher et al., 1994), social status (Li & Kenrick, 2006; Regan et al., 2000; Scheller et al., 2024), and even humour (McGee & Shevlin, 2009). For decades, research has discussed how the importance of these traits during partner selection varies between individuals, with a large amount of this work dedicated to investigating gender differences (Buss, 1989; Doosje et al., 1999; Eastwick & Finkel, 2008; Furnham, 2009; Li & Kenrick, 2006; Nevid, 1984; Regan et al., 2000; Scheller et al., 2024; Sprecher, 1989; Sprecher et al., 1994; Tskhay et al., 2017).

Although gender differences do sometimes manifest in actual behaviors and preferences, these may also be affected by our beliefs about gender differences in partner preferences—for example, believing that most/all straight men (compared to straight women) prioritize appearance over personality. These beliefs about specific groups' priorities when evaluating a partner—which

we refer to as attraction stereotypes—likely play a significant role in influencing individuals' perceptions and interactions with viable partners. These stereotypes may drive value judgments of others (e.g., "straight men are shallow") or inform self-presentation strategies (e.g., "I have to diet and work out to be attractive to straight men").

1.1 Gendered Attraction Stereotypes

Gendered stereotypes are pervasive. Best-selling books such as "Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus" feature ideas about how men and women are dissimilar, suggesting that the things they need and want from their partners are inherently different. For example, the author (Gray, 2009) states, "Men are motivated and empowered when they feel needed… Women are motivated and empowered when they feel cherished." His book is full of these confident (and largely anecdotal) assertions describing large and absolute gender differences. Similarly, some of the most popular self-help dating books from the last couple decades, including He's Just Not That Into You and Act Like a Lady, Think Like a Man, highlight the supposed fundamental misunderstandings that occur between the "opposite" sexes due to their wildly different priorities. These books suggest men and women are "from different planets and were supposed to be different" (Gray, 2009) and claim that they speak different languages; all three of the listed books supply "translations" between what men and women say and what it means that they want.

Also dangerous are the lessons and myths that self-labeled "alpha males" have interpreted and manipulated from evolutionary psychology, developing a pseudoscience that perpetuates dated and harmful stereotypes. In what is called the "manosphere" — a term that refers to online communities and spaces that perpetuate these misogynistic views (Cannito et al., 2021; Ging, 2019) — socio-biological research findings have been used to depict sexual relationships as a marketplace and justify their treatment of women as commodities "to be gained and obtained"

(Cannito & Ferrero Camoletto, 2022). The “LMS law” is another refrain of the manosphere, which states that what attracts women to men are only these three things; Looks, Money, and Status (Incels Wiki, 2021). Their framework holds “to an immutability of gender models, practices and relations that becomes a sort of destiny for men and women, neglecting the socio-cultural influences on their construction” (Cannito & Ferrero Camoletto, 2022, p.604).

It doesn’t take much searching to find attraction stereotypes presenting themselves in multiple forms of popular media as well. Movie makeover montages are frequently depictions of transformations performed with the purpose of attracting the other sex in accordance with gendered stereotypes (Clueless; Crazy, Stupid Love). When a new girl comes to school in Clueless, the main characters quickly decide she needs a makeover as soon as she shows interest in dating boys, proceeding to dye her hair, change her clothes and get her to start exercising in pursuit of making her more attractive to boys. Immediately following the makeover montage, the new girl announces the next book she will read will be Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus.

Attraction stereotypes are not on display in fictional forms of media alone; from reality TV’s endorsement of such conventions (Love Island; The Bachelor; Keeping Up with the Kardashians), to songs that perpetuate these beliefs (“No Scrubs” by TLC; “Material Girl” by Madonna; “Girls, Girls, Girls” by Mötley Crüe), attraction stereotypes have made their way into mainstream media, where they are usually presented as fact and assumed to be true.

These examples illustrate attraction stereotypes that are centered around gender differences and provide perceptions of the kinds of traits or actions that are considered to be most important for romantic and sexual attraction according to men and women. These perceptions likely then guide behaviors: for example, for straight men who think that straight women prioritize wealth and

status, they will prioritize displays of these qualities instead of personality traits or interests, regardless of the accuracy of this attraction stereotype.

1.2 The Evolution of Attraction Stereotypes

Thus far we have described some contexts in which attraction stereotypes present themselves, but where did these stereotypes originate? Though these kinds of stereotypes have existed throughout history, close relationships and attraction research have undoubtedly perpetuated these stereotypes in recent times.

Evolutionary psychology is a dominant player in prior literature on romantic and sexual relationships. Citing the differential investment required in procreating as outlined in Parental Investment Theory (Trivers, 1972), many evolutionary theorists have argued that men and women have distinct mating strategies for procreation, resulting in inherently different preferences for their partners' characteristics (Buss & Barnes, 1986). According to this perspective, men care about physical attributes to a greater extent because they are seeking indicators of youth, fertility, and reproductive value, whereas women care about other qualities that signify men's commitment and ability to provide (Buss, 1989; Simpson & Gangestad, 1992). A majority of the papers on partner preferences from the last 30 to 40 years cite evolutionary psychology and its seminal papers (Buss, 1989; Buss & Barnes, 1986; Trivers, 1972) as helping to form their hypotheses and materials (Botwin et al., 1997; Doosje et al., 1999; Emond & Eduljee, 2014; Hatfield & Sprecher, 1995; Howard & Perilloux, 2017; Li & Kenrick, 2006; Najman et al., 2006; Regan et al., 2000; Russock, 2011; Simpson & Gangestad, 1992; Sprecher, 1989; Sprecher et al., 1994; Stewart et al., 2000; Wiederman & Dubois, 1998), often without question or critique.

However, evidence regarding the preferences that individuals hold for their partners has been inconsistent for decades. In fact, prior to the generation of Parental Investment Theory and

publication of its associated assumptions (Buss, 1989; Buss & Barnes, 1986; Trivers, 1972), Powers (1971) performed a review of 30 years of partner preferences research and concluded that, "Ideal mate characteristics stressed by males are surprisingly similar to those of importance to females" (p. 214), though there were a few differences. Since then, more evidence has been collected that challenge gender related assumptions. Studies have produced results that contradict the belief that men care more than women about physical attractiveness (Emond & Eduljee, 2014; Li & Kenrick, 2006; Luo & Zhang, 2009; Sprecher, 1989; Tskhay et al., 2017), as well as findings that belie the presumption that women care more than men about loyalty and personality (Eastwick & Finkel, 2008; Emond & Eduljee, 2014; Regan et al., 2000); some of the already listed studies also counter the claim that women care more about earning potential (Eastwick & Finkel, 2008; Sprecher, 1989).

Nonetheless, psychology has continued to formulate close relationships research under the shadow of evolutionary theory and this has been picked up by lay people in their own theorizing pertaining to gender differences in romance and sex. Gray (2009) refers to his book as "a theoretical analysis of psychological differences" (p. 8) and refers to evolution throughout his extended metaphor describing man's development on Mars and women's on Venus. There are numerous recent papers that discuss on the use and misuse of evolutionary psychology in the manosphere (Bachaud & Johns, 2023; Cannito & Ferrero Camoletto, 2022; Ging, 2019; Vallerga & Zurbriggen, 2022; Van Valkenburgh, 2021). Though most of these articles use words like "appropriate" and "misuse" to explain how alpha males, incels, pick-up artists and other misogynistic groups twist evolutionary psychology theory, Bachaud and Johns (2023) criticize the language of evolutionary psychology for its ability to lend itself to the moralistic judgements and sexist beliefs that are pervasive in such communities.

1.3 The Heteronormativity of Close Relationships Literature

Research on romance and close relationships has been very heteronormative (Thorne et al., 2019; Ward & Schneider, 2009), so much so that researchers sometimes generalize gender differences without even discussing the potential moderating role of sexual orientation for these differences. Evolutionary psychology is likely responsible for much of this heteronormativity, having an outsized influence on research on attraction (Parameswaran, 2014), gender differences and experiences , sexuality (Thorne et al., 2019), and romance (Bachaud & Johns, 2023; Beyers & Reber, 1998).

Endemic in this entire literature is a cisnormative, heteronormative bias in both the participants surveyed and the targets judged. Though close relationships research has begun to have a more diverse body of work, there exists only a limited amount of theory surrounding non-heterosexual men and women's prioritization of partner traits, and none for those who do not identify with either gender. At the time of writing this, there has not been any mainstream psychological work investigating the partner preferences of experiences of attraction of non-binary, transgender, or others who are not cisgender. Table 1 illustrates the lack of consideration or inclusion of 2S-LGBTQ+ participants in prior attraction and partner preferences research. Interestingly, a couple of the earliest studies included non-heterosexual participants, yet more recent work has not.

Thorne et al. (2019) note that since the historical development of theories about love and relationships has occurred under such rigid norms this brings into question their applicability in today's modern context. They also point out that heterosexuality is rarely viewed as an ideal, including a reference to Gray's (2009) depiction of heterosexual marriage that requires "careful management" of a couple's gender differences. Researchers have "call[ed] for a new body of

theorizing on sexuality, one not subsumed under the study of sex and gender" (Ward & Schneider, 2009) and evolutionary psychology in particular has been critiqued for its assumption that the purpose of sexuality is procreation (Parameswaran, 2014), which is evident in their use of language like "mating behaviours."

Table 1

Presence of (or Lack Thereof) LGBTQ+ Participants in Partner Preferences Literature

Year	Authors	Gay/ lesbian	Bisexual	Non-cisgender
1977	Laner	Yes, but combined into one group		No
1986	Engel & Saracino	Yes	Yes	No
1986	Buss & Barnes	No	No	No
1989	Buss	No	No	No
1989	Sprecher	No	No	No
1992	Simpson & Gangestad	No	No	No
1994	Sprecher et al.	No	No	No
1995	Hatfield & Sprecher	No	No	No
1997	Botwin et al.	No	No	No
1998	Wiederman & Dubois	No	No	No
1999	Doosje et al.	No	No	No
2000	Stewart et al.	No	No	No
2003	Goodwin & Tinker	No	No	No
2003	Todosijević et al..	No	No	No
2006	Li & Kenrick	No	No	No
2006	Najman et al.	No	No	No
2008	Eastwick & Finkel	No	No	No
2009	Furnham	No	No	No
2009	Luo & Zhang	No	No	No
2009	McGee & Shevlin	No	No	No
2011	Russock	Yes	Yes	No
2014	Emond & Eduljee	No	No	No
2014	Meltzer et al.	No	No	No
2017	Howard & Perilloux	Yes	No	No
2017	Štěrbová et al.	Yes	No	No
2017	Tskhay et al.	No	No	No
2019	Sprecher et al.	No	No	No
2020	Mehmetoglu & Määttänen	No	No	No

What little we know about attraction stereotypes is also extremely heteronormative. For example, when Sprecher (1989) investigated participants' perceptions of their own partner

priorities, participants were assumed to be heterosexual and all were given materials related to their interest in someone of the "opposite" sex and the only comparative analyses performed were based on gender differences. Additionally, gendered narratives almost always exclude those who are not cisgender and heterosexual. Men are from Mars, Women are From Venus and the manosphere are apt examples of how people's strong beliefs regarding gender essentialism can result in ignoring the existence of men and women who desire partners of the same-sex.

Stereotypes of gay men and women have been found to be consistent with gender inversion biases wherein gay men are stereotyped to be similar to straight women and gay women are stereotyped to be similar to straight men (Kite & Deaux, 1987). Thus, even when people do consider the desires and characteristics of gay individuals, they are still viewed through a heteronormative lens. Yet, the few studies that have explored the desires of LGB people have learned that queer participants tend to report similar partner priorities and traits desired as heterosexual participants (Engel & Saracino, 1986; Laner, 1977; Štěrbová et al., 2017). Laner (1977) actually compared gay men and women's (and straight men and women's) self-reported priorities to perceptions of their priorities and discovered that people's beliefs about what mattered to gay people did not match gay participants' reported preferences.

1.4 Attraction Stereotypes, Self-Reported Attraction Priorities, and Meta-Stereotypes

Similar to Laner (1977), a few other studies on partner preferences have compared self-perceptions and perceptions of other's priorities. Eastwick and Finkel (2008) and Sprecher (1989) found that, although men and women reported perceptions of their partner preferences that matched evolution-based hypotheses, experimental results did not demonstrate expected gender differences. Unfortunately, the extent to which self-reported attraction preferences vary across the

intersection of gender and sexuality has been understudied—and, specifically, how much these self-reports diverge from attraction stereotypes about one's group.

One relevant concept for the present study is meta-stereotypes (Voyles et al., 2014), which are stereotypes that one is aware that others hold about their own social group.. It is probable that most men and women, especially those who are heterosexual, are aware of the attraction stereotypes about those who share their identity and must contend with their own beliefs about their partner priorities. For example, how do straight men perceive their own experience of attraction compared to other men—if a straight man knows of a stereotype that men are shallow, how does he think of himself in relation to this stereotype? A few responses to this are possible: one could embrace the stereotype ("yes, I am shallow too"), reject the stereotype ("men aren't shallow"), or defy the stereotype ("most men are shallow, but not me"). By sampling across a wide range of gender and sexual identities and asking people about their own attraction priorities, we can explore these different possibilities.

1.5 The Present Work

The primary goal of this exploratory work is to delve into the effects of gender, sexual orientation, and their intersecting identity which we will refer to as "gender-by-sexuality", on peoples' perceptions of these identity groups' partner priorities. Additionally, the present work seeks to understand how self-reported perceptions vary by gender-by-sexuality groups and their differences from attraction stereotypes. We will do so by (a) describing attraction stereotypes across all identity groups, (b) comparing attraction stereotypes according to gender-by-sexuality identity groups, (c) comparing self-reported partner preferences to others' stereotypes across all groups, and (d) comparing self-reported partner preferences to stereotype patterns according to gender-by-sexuality identities.

CHAPTER 2: STUDY ONE

2.1 Participants

We surveyed 214 University of Waterloo students recruited through SONA, with 96% of the participants' ages falling between 18 and 25 (M = 19.9, SD = 2.5). The majority of the participants (69%) identified as women (n = 149), 43 identified as men, and 21 identified as non-binary, gender non-conforming, genderqueer, gender fluid, or gender apathetic; one person chose not to disclose their gender. Participants were able to select more than one sexual orientation from the following options; straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, queer, self-define, and prefer not to say.

To obtain a diverse sample that allowed us to explore differences between individuals of distinct intersectional identities, we oversampled from the LGBTQ+ population at the university. As a consequence of participants being able to select multiple identities, the total count of sexual orientation responses exceeded the sample size of 217, with 84 identifying as straight, 59 as bisexual, 24 as queer, 22 as lesbian, 19 as gay, 13 as pansexual, 7 as asexual, and 9 choosing to self-define or not disclose their sexual orientation.

For analysis, participants were sorted into one of three groups: straight, bisexual (bisexual, pansexual, and queer), gay (gay and lesbian), and other. Participants' categorization was based on the label they selected that was most specific (e.g. someone who selected bisexual and queer would be categorized as bisexual) and indicated the gender(s) they were attracted to (e.g. someone who selected lesbian and asexual would be categorized as gay). Table 2 presents the intersectional identities of our participants based on their gender and sexual orientation. For any analyses including participants' gender and sexual orientation as variables will only use the participants who fall into the nine cells in bold (n = 210).

Table 2

Participant Demographics based on Gender-by-Sexuality Identity Group

	Women	Men	Non-binary, gender non-conforming, genderqueer, or gender fluid	Prefer not to say	Total
Straight	**66**	**18**	**---**	---	84
Bisexual	**63**	**10**	**16**	---	89
Gay	**17**	**15**	**5**	1	38
Other	3	**---**	**---**	**---**	3
Total	149	43	21	1	214

2.2 Materials

i. Stereotypes about partner preferences

Participants rated the importance they believe different groups place on the following the characteristics when evaluating attractiveness: appearance of someone's face; appearance of someone's physique; clothing style; personality; values; and hobbies/interests. They provided these ratings for six gender-by-sexuality identities: gay women, gay men, bisexual women, bisexual men, straight women, and straight men. Ratings were grouped based on identity and were presented to participants in a matrix format (as seen in Appendix A), with the following instructions: "For each of the characteristics below, please indicate how important you think that characteristic is to [identity] when they consider their attraction to someone else."

Ratings were given on a seven-point Likert scale from "not at all important" to "extremely important" with these words included as anchors, as well as a mid-point labelled "somewhat important". Participants provided all six characteristic importance ratings for one identity group before proceeding to provide ratings for a different group. The order in which the six identities were shown to participants was randomized to avoid order effects.

Additionally, some participants were asked to provide self-report ratings for the importance of the same six characteristics when considering their own experiences of attraction. The instructions for this task used the same wording as above but referred to the participant's own preferences (also available in Appendix A). This addition was randomized along with the other matrix ratings.

ii. Asexuality Survey

As an exploratory measure, a questionnaire about participants' degree of asexuality was created, using four questions from the Asexuality Identification Scale (AIS; Yule et al., 2019). Responses were given on a five-point Likert scale, from "completely false" to "completely true" to the following statements:

1. I experience sexual attraction toward other people.
2. I don't feel that I fit the conventional categories of sexual orientation such as heterosexual, homosexual (gay or lesbian), or bisexual
3. I find myself experiencing sexual attraction toward another person.
4. The term "nonsexual" would be an accurate description of my sexuality.

Responses to statements 2 and 4 were reverse-coded and then the average of all four ratings were averaged to create a compositive variable that indicates where participants fall on the spectrum of asexuality. A composite score of 1 would indicate they have strong asexual tendencies.

iii. Demographics

There was a brief demographics survey for participants to complete. They were asked to provide their age, sex (at birth), gender, sexual orientation, cultural background, and race.

iv. Additional tasks

Participants also completed a qualitative interview and a face rating task. The results of these tasks, though related to the present work, will not be explored in this paper.

2.3 Procedure

Participants reviewed the consent form and indicated their agreement before beginning. After completing the consent form, but prior to completing the tasks relevant to this project's goals, participants were interviewed by an RA. Then, participants completed the remaining tasks and questionnaires on the computer. They were presented with the following instructions:

> In this part of the study, you will respond to statements about the attraction of diverse groups of people. These will vary by gender and sexual orientation, creating six intersectional identity groups. Intersectionality can be defined as the overlapping of multiple social identities and their effect on a person's experiences; for the purposes of this study, combinations of gender and sexual identities make up the various intersectional identities.
>
> There are no right or wrong answers – we are only interested in understanding what you think about others' experiences of attraction.

There was an additional rating task that asked participants to rate how attractive they found 120 photographed faces. The order in which the facial attractiveness task and the partner preferences rating task were completed was randomized to avoid order effects.

Following the partner preferences ratings task (and the face rating task), participants responded to the asexuality measure and provided demographics. Upon completion of these materials, participants were asked to indicate their level of engagement and honesty throughout their participation. They were then provided with a debriefing and thank you letter, after which they informed the RA they had completed the study whenever they were ready.

2.4 Results

Each participant rated the importance of the six characteristics for the six target groups, including whichever one they might consider their ingroup (i.e., the group that shared the same gender and sexual orientation), along with the importance of the six characteristics for themselves when they are determining whether they are attracted to a potential partner. Because each

participant rated multiple target groups, participants' general tendency to provide high or low ratings were accounted for by using multilevel models, with trials nested within participants. Given the large number of comparisons, not all pairwise comparisons are explicitly reported here. Many of the effects observed are quite large, and non-overlapping 95% confidence intervals correspond with a p-value of approximately .002 (MacGregor-Fors & Payton, 2013).

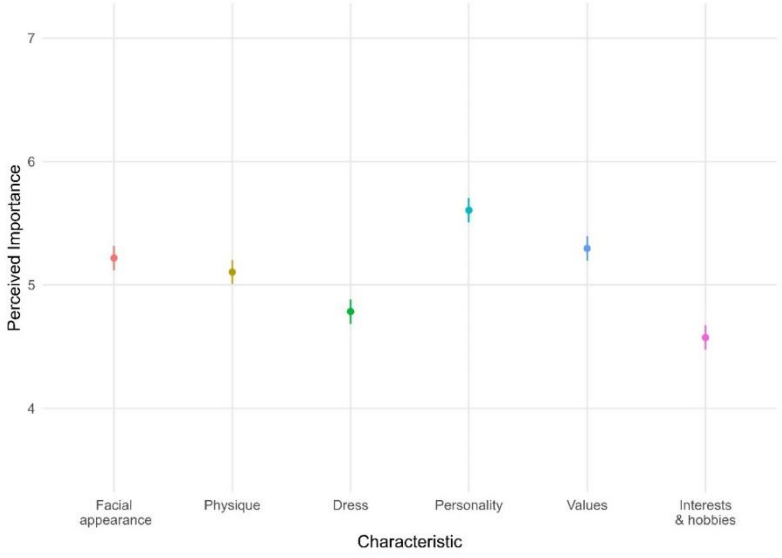
We first analyzed perception ratings, both across all identities and by gender-by-sexuality identity groups. Then, we analyzed self-response ratings and the extent to which they differed from attraction stereotype ratings for each of the six characteristics. Finally, we compared self-response ratings for each of the six characteristics will be compared according to participants' gender-by-sexuality identity.

i. Stereotype Ratings

To determine target effects on participants' ratings of importance, we fit six models to predict the amount of importance estimated for each characteristic (a) across all targets and (b) according to target gender-by-sexuality identity.

Figure 1

Attraction Stereotypes across all Target Groups



Attraction Stereotypes Averaged across all Target Groups. Figure 1 depicts the average importance rating for each characteristic using all target ratings. Participants perceived personality to be the most important characteristic for determining people's attraction to a potential partner and considered it to be significantly more important than all other qualities. Values and appearance of face and physique were generally seen as less important than personality, but more important than a person's style or interests and hobbies.

Attraction Stereotypes by Identity Group. Next, we analyzed differences in attraction stereotypes across target gender and sexuality. Each model predicted the average importance rating for the relevant characteristic using the targets' gender and sexual orientation as interacting terms. See Figure 2 for the average importance perceived to be placed on each trait by each target groups.

Facial appearance. Participants' attraction stereotypes for facial appearance were significantly predicted by gender, $F(1, 1065) = 140.88$, $p < .001$), sexual orientation, $F(2, 1065) = 92.69$, $p < .001$, and their interaction, $F(2, 1066) = 17.48$, $p < .001$.

Participants held gender attraction stereotypes that men prioritize facial appearance more than women. Participants held sexual orientation attraction stereotypes that bisexual people prioritize facial appearance less than straight and gay people. Straight and gay targets received similar ratings of importance for facial appearance. Participants reported unique gender-by-sexuality attraction stereotypes: whereas gay and straight men were perceived to prioritize facial appearance more than gay and straight women respectively, bisexual men and women were perceived to similarly prioritize facial appearance.

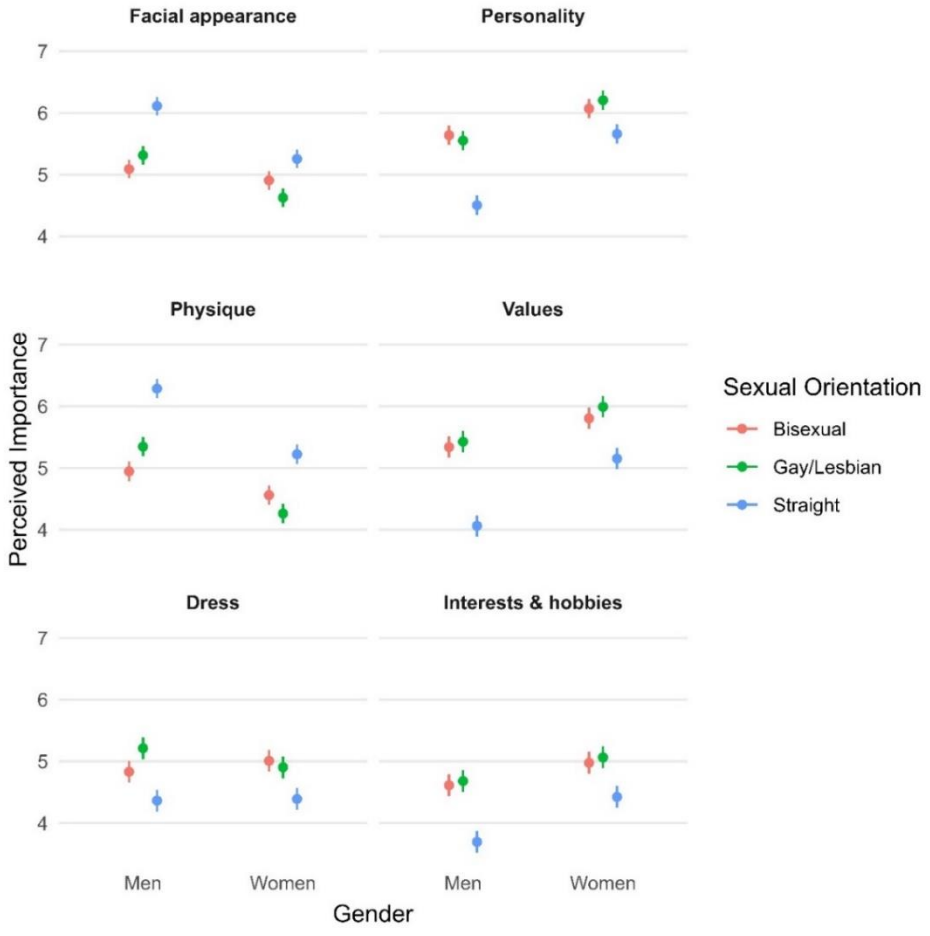
Physique. Participants' attraction stereotypes for physique were significantly predicted by target gender, $F(1, 1062.6) = 251.13$, $p < .001$, sexual orientation, $F(2, 1062.9) = 149.85$, $p < .001$, and their interaction, $F(2, 1063.4) = 18.60$, $p < .001$.

Women received lower importance ratings for physical appearance than men, and straight targets were perceived to place more importance on a potential partner's physique than when targets were bisexual or gay. The interaction was such that women tended to receive lower ratings than men, though straight women received significantly higher ratings than bisexual men.

Contrasts between each of the six gender-by-sexuality groups were significant, except for one: participants provided similar ratings for gay men and straight women's importance placed on a potential partner's physique. Participants held stereotypes that straight men care considerably more about their partner's physique than all other identity groups and gay women care significantly less than other groups.

Figure 2

Attraction Stereotypes of Perceived Importance for Partner Traits according to Target Identity



Dress. Participants' attraction stereotypes for dress were significantly predicted by target sexual orientation, $F(2, 1065.2) = 44.34$, $p < .001$, but not target gender. However, the interaction between gender and sexual orientation was a significant predictor, $F(2, 1065.7) = 5.27$, $p = .005$.

Participants held stereotypes that straight target groups place less value on the way a potential partner dresses compared to LGB targets. Post-hoc pairwise contrasts indicated that straight men and women received lower scores than bisexual and gay men and women. Though participants tended to give lower importance ratings to dress when the target group included men, they held beliefs that gay men prioritize a potential partners' style more than all other groups except gay and bisexual women.

Personality. Participants' attraction stereotypes for personality were significantly predicted by target gender, $F(1, 1062.6) = 186.64$, $p < .001$, sexual orientation, $F(2, 1062.9) = 91.64$, $p < .001$, and their interaction, $F(2, 1063.4) = 15.27$, $p < .001$.

Women and LGBTQ+ targets received stereotype ratings indicating greater prioritization of personality than targets who were men or straight. Despite the perception that women care more about the personality of a partner than other groups, straight women received significantly lower ratings than bisexual and gay women, and received ratings that were more similar to those of bisexual men. Participants perceived straight men to place significantly less importance on a partner's personality than all five of the other target groups.

Values. Participants' attraction stereotypes for values were significantly predicted by target gender, $F(1, 1064.2) = 153.95$, $p < .001$, sexual orientation, $F(2, 1064.5) = 148.14$, $p < .001$, and their interaction, $F(2, 1065) = 11.63$, $p < .001$.

Similar to attraction stereotypes regarding the importance of personality in a partner, participant's stereotypes about values were characterized by providing higher ratings for the

importance of a partners' values when the targets were women or LGBTQ+. Despite this, straight women and bisexual men received significantly lower ratings than gay and bisexual women. Stereotype ratings for values were similar for straight women, bisexual and gay men. Participants provided ratings indicative of beliefs that straight men, as a group, care significantly less about potential partners' values than any other target group.

Hobbies & interests. Participants' attraction stereotypes were significantly predicted by target gender, $F(1, 1065.6) = 70.16$, $p < .001$, sexual orientation, $F(2, 1065.8) = 77.99$, $p < .001$, and their interaction, $F(2, 1066.4) = 4.08$, $p = .017$.

Men and straight targets were stereotyped by participants as caring less about hobbies and interests than women, gay, and bisexual targets: women and LGBTQ+ target groups received significantly higher ratings for the importance of a partners' hobbies and interests. Gay and bisexual women received similarly high ratings, but significantly higher than gay and bisexual men, whose ratings were similar as well. The interaction resulted in straight women receiving lower ratings than these four groups, despite women tending to receive higher ratings. Straight men receiver lower stereotype ratings for hobbies and interests' importance than all other groups, including straight women.

ii. Stereotype Ratings compared to Self-Report Ratings

Next, we compared attraction stereotypes to self-report ratings. First, we made these comparisons averaging across gender-by-sexuality groups, to test whether self-ratings were generally higher or lower than attraction stereotypes for specific characteristics. Then, we broke down these comparisons by gender and sexuality.

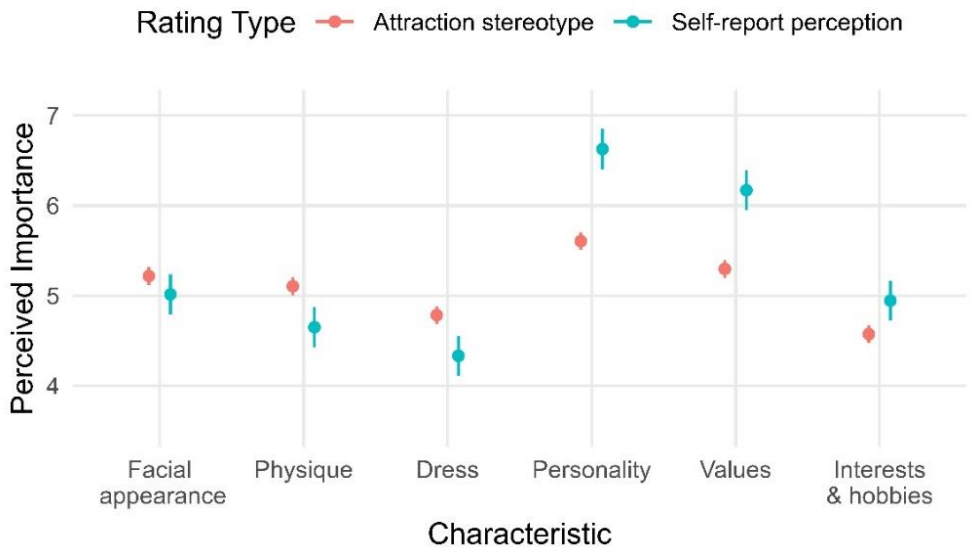
To statistically test whether participants provided different ratings for themselves than they did for target groups, we incorporated *rating type* a new binary variable into our model that

indicated whether ratings were self or perception ratings, leaving us with four predictors of ratings: characteristic, gender, sexuality, and rating type. The focus of these analyses were the effects of characteristic*rating type interactions, as these illustrate whether participants provided significantly different ratings for themselves compared to attraction stereotypes for certain characteristics.

Attraction Stereotypes Compared to Self-Report Ratings by Identity Group. Before we interrogated the differences between self-report and perception ratings according to identity group, we compared average self-report ratings of importance across all groups to perceptions of all other targets. Figure 3 illustrates these comparisons.

Figure 3

Perceived Importance for Characteristics by Rating Type



The main effect of characteristic was significant, $F(5, 8250) = 116.93$, $p < .001$. The contrast between self-ratings and attraction stereotypes also produced a significant main effect, $F(1, 8352) = 16.87$, $p < .001$ but the two-way interaction between the characteristic being rated and whether the target was oneself or any other target was the focus of these analyses. The interaction was also significant, $F(5, 8249) = 34.50$, $p < .001$.

Ratings for physique and dress were higher for attraction stereotypes than for self-reported ratings. Conversely, ratings for personality, values, and interests were lower for attraction stereotypes than for self-reported ratings. Facial appearance was the only characteristic for which participants provided similar ratings regardless of whether they were rating themselves or others.

Attraction Stereotypes and Self-Report Ratings Compared by Identity Group. For the following analyses, responses were filtered such that for each target group, only perception ratings of the relevant target group were included, along with self-report ratings from participants who identified with the gender and sexual orientation of the relevant target group. Each multilevel model included characteristics and the self-other contrast variable as predictors. For each model, the interaction term will be the only predictor that we report the significance of since the focus here is the effect of self-reported ratings versus attraction stereotypes for characteristics' importance. To determine which characteristics differed significantly between attraction stereotypes and self-reported ratings, we examined post-hoc pairwise contrasts between the average characteristic's importance for each type of rating. The mean difference for each contrast is presented in the table below.

Table 3

Mean Difference for each Characteristic's Pairwise Contrast of Rating Type

	Bisexual men	Bisexual women	Gay men	Gay women	Straight men	Straight women
Facial appearance	**−0.674***	**−0.882***	−0.446	−1.184***	0.385	−0.298
Physique	−1.363	**−0.848****	−0.031	−1.169***	**0.942****	−0.054
Dress	**1.069*****	**1.216*****	**1.451*****	**1.091*****	0.632	**0.837***
Personality	**−0.667***	−0.256	**−0.746***	−0.143	**−1.761*****	−0.432
Values	−0.117	0.323	−0.026	0.488	**−1.359*****	−0.092
Interests & hobbies	0.157	0.491	0.226	0.558	**−0.728***	0.177

p-value notation: .05*, .01**, < .001***

Higher rating type : Attraction stereotype Self-report perception

Bisexual Men. The two-way interaction between the characteristics and rating type was significant for bisexual men, $F(5, 1135) = 4.71$, $p < .001$. Stereotype ratings were higher for bisexual's men importance placed on dress than bisexual men's self-report ratings. On the other hand, bisexual men reported caring more about their partner's personality than participants stereotyped them as caring. Bisexual men also reported placing greater priority on the appearance of their partner's face than others thought they did. This finding is particularly interesting considering the findings that participants tended to provide similar stereotype ratings to self-report ratings for the characteristic of facial appearance. Importance placed on physique, values, and hobbies and interests did not significantly differ between self-report and stereotype ratings.

Bisexual women. The two-way interaction between the characteristics and rating type was significant for bisexual women, $F(5, 1134) = 8.31$, $p < .001$. Like bisexual men, bisexual women were stereotyped as caring less about their potential partners' facial appearance than they self-reported to care. Bisexual women were also perceived to care less about their partners' physique than bisexual women indicated. Conversely, stereotype ratings for bisexual women prioritization of their partners' style of dress were higher than bisexual women's self-report ratings but contrasts between values and hobbies and interests were insignificant.

Gay men. The two-way interaction between the characteristics and rating type was significant for gay men, $F(5, 1135) = 5.50$, $p < .001$. However, only one of the contrasts was significant: stereotype ratings were higher for gay men's prioritization of the way their partners dress than gay men's self-report ratings.

Gay women. The two-way interaction between the characteristics and rating type was significant for lesbians, $F(5, 1135) = 10.58$, $p < .011$. Participants held stereotypes such that their ratings of gay women's priorities underestimated the self-report ratings gay women gave for facial

appearance and physique's appearance. In contrast, stereotype ratings of the importance of partners' dress to gay women were significantly higher than gay women's self-report ratings, which was alike to the stereotype perception of bisexual women and men, as well as gay men. Ratings of personality, values, and hobbies and interests did not differ much by type of rating, though the contrast was marginally significant for hobbies and interests.

Straight Men. The interaction between the characteristics and rating type was significant for straight men, $F(5, 1136) = 12.19$, $p < .001$. Pairwise contrasts indicated that stereotype ratings for straight men were significantly higher for physique than straight men self-reported. Conversely, participants believed straight men cared less than they self-reported to care about personality, values, and hobbies and interests. The appearance of a partner's face received similar ratings regardless of whether the ratings were self-report or stereotype ratings.

Straight Women. The two-way interaction between the characteristics and rating type was marginally significant for straight women, $F(5, 1141) = 2.00$, $p = .077$. The only pairwise contrast that was significant was for dress: straight women self-reported that the way a potential partner dresses was less important to them that stereotype ratings indicated.

Ingroup Attraction Stereotypes compared to Self-Report Ratings. Since participants who shared an ingroup with one of the identity group targets (matching gender and sexual orientation) provided a set of responses for their ingroup in addition to their self-ratings, it is possible to compare self-ratings to ingroup perception ratings. By examining similarities and differences between participants' self-ratings and their ingroup ratings, we can see how participants think they are unique or akin to other members of their ingroup.

Four of the six groups gave significantly higher ratings when completing their self-ratings compared to their perception of their ingroup for one characteristic: personality. Bisexual men and

gay women perceived their ingroup to care a similar amount about a potential partner's personality as they themselves reported caring; in fact, bisexual men reported similar levels of importance for all six characteristics as their importance ratings for their ingroup target, as did gay women. This was reflected by an insignificant interaction term in both of their models.

In contrast, straight men self-reported (M = 6.08, 95% CI [5.37, 6.78]) caring more about personality than they thought other straight men cared (M = 4.67, 95% CI [4.08, 5.28]), and this twoway interaction was significant, $F(5, 157.89) = 3.91$, $p = .002$. The interaction was also significant for straight women, $F(5, 657.8) = 4.14$, $p = .001$, as they believed they place more importance on personality (M = 6.74, 95% CI [6.44, 7.04]) than other straight women do (M = 6.39, 95% CI [6.11, 6.68]); however, the effect of rating type on personality only had marginal significance. Gay men, $F(5, 100.30) = 8.24$, $p < .001$, (M = 6.33, 95% CI [5.42, 7.24]) and bisexual women $F(5, 489.68) = 2.96$, $p = .012$, (M = 6.67, 95% CI [6.29, 7.05]) provided higher self-reported importance ratings for personality than they did for other gay men (M = 4.53, 95% CI [3.93, 5.14]) or bisexual women (M = 6.03, 95% CI [5.76, 6.31]) respectively.

Only two other characteristics produced significant interactions with rating type across the six target groups. Importance ratings for a partner's values were significantly higher for participants' self-ratings compared to their ingroup perception ratings for straight men, straight women, and gay men. The way a partner dresses was rated less important to oneself than to their ingroup target for gay men.

2.3 Discussion

The results of Study 1 describe people's attraction stereotypes, finding that participants held stereotypes based on both gender and sexual orientation, as well as their intersecting identities. Participants held beliefs that identity groups including men tend to care more about their

partner's appearance than women, whereas groups of women were presumed to care more about personality and values. Similarly, participants provided ratings indicating they stereotyped straight targets to prioritize appearances more than other groups and stereotyped LGBTQ+ targets as placing more importance on potential partners' personality and values. Importance ratings for partner's hobbies and interests, along with the way they dress, also varied according to identity.

Furthermore, these stereotype ratings differ significantly from what identity groups self-report as their attraction priorities, resulting in potentially distorted perceptions of what matters most to people of unique gender-by-sexuality identities. These stereotypes are evident even within ingroup perception ratings, suggesting meta-stereotypes may impact individuals' perceptions of their own ingroup members.

This study has a few key limitations. We used a convenience sampling through a University's study recruitment service. This approach resulted in small sample sizes for certain gender-by-sexuality participant groups, which prevented us from adequately examining perceiver-level effects and some self-report group ratings. Men in general—bisexual men in particular—and non-binary individuals were underrepresented and the accuracy and statistical power of analyses including their identity are questionable. We also had little sampling variability on dimensions such as age and education, and the other tasks in the study may have influenced attraction stereotypes as it is possible that performing qualitative interviews regarding partner preferences prior to the importance ratings task may have impacted participants' ratings. We address these concerns in Study 2 and incorporate a couple of key extensions.

CHAPTER 3: STUDY TWO

3.1 Changes and Additions

i. Addressing Limitations of Study 1

To ensure that we had sufficient sample sizes in each intersecting gender-by-sexuality cell, we recruited North American participants using Prolific's quota management service, which allowed us to request equal numbers of gay, bisexual, and straight participants who were men, women, and non-binary. Additionally, participants only completed the stereotype and self-ratings task, addressing concerns regarding potential order effects of the other tasks in Study 1.

ii. Extensions

We added four additional qualities of theoretical relevance for attraction stereotypes and self-ratings of attraction preferences: financial resources; education level; social capital; and household contributions and engagement We also asked participants to what extent they think of each of the six gender-by-sexuality groups as pursuing short or long-term relationships. We do not report analyses of this variable here but discuss this variable as a potential mechanism for attraction stereotypes in the general discussion.

3.2 Participants

We surveyed 436 adults from Canada and the United States using Prolific, setting quota limits of 50 for nine combinations of gender (women, men, non-binary) and sexuality (straight, gay, bisexual). The quota for straight non-binary participants was not reached, stopping at 36 participants. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 71 and the mean age of the participants was 31.51 (SD = 10.23). Of the participants, 156 identified as women, 159 identified as men, 115 identified as non-binary, gender non-conforming, genderqueer, gender fluid, or agender, and two people chose to not identify their gender.

As in Study 1, participants were allowed to select more than one sexual orientation from the same list provided in Study 1; 149 participants identified as straight, 119 as bisexual, 67 as gay, 66 as lesbian, 53 as queer, 30 as pansexual, 12 as asexual, and 13 chose to self-disclose or not share their sexual orientation. Participants also specified whether they identified most as bisexual/pansexual, gay/lesbian, or straight; this question was used for analysis.

Table 4 presents the number of participants who identified as each gender-by-sexuality identity. As was the case for Study 1, only the participants who fall into the nine cells in bold will be included in analyses that include gender and/or sexual orientation as variables of interest.

Table 4

Participant Demographics based on Gender-by-Sexuality Identity Group

	Women	Men	Non-binary, gender non-conforming, genderqueer, or gender fluid	Prefer not to say	Total
Straight	**69**	**75**	**15**	1	160
Bisexual	**44**	**38**	**48**	3	133
Gay	**42**	**46**	**46**	2	136
Other	1	---	6	---	7
Total	156	159	115	6	436

3.3 Materials

i. Stereotypes about Partner Preferences

Participants were asked to rate how much importance they perceive the six gender-by-sexuality groups to place on the ten characteristics: facial appearance; physique; dress; personality; values; hobbies and interests; *financial resources; education level; social capital; and household contributions and engagement* (new characteristics in italics).

As in Study 1, participants rated each characteristic within a matrix for each identity group, and all participants completed the same matrix for themselves, with all seven sets being presented in random order. Unlike in Study 1, definitions for values, hobbies and interests, and the four added characteristics were provided along with the task instructions. Refer to Appendix B to see the definitions provided.

After completing the seven sets of ratings, participants were asked, "For each group of people below, do you think of them as having a tendency to pursue short- or long-term relationships?" They then provided ratings for each of the six gender-by-sexuality groups, as well as themselves, on a 6-point Likert scale from strong tendency to pursue short-term relationships (1) to strong tendency to pursue long-term relationships (6), with the middle range of options including moderate and weak tendency to pursue either type of relationship.

ii. Additional Surveys

The asexuality measure was included again and remained the same as in Study 1. The demographics survey used all the same questions as Study 1 but additional questions regarding income and education level were included to control for those variables when looking at participants' ratings for importance of financial resources and education level respectively.

3.4 Procedure

Participants provided consent, then completed the self-report and stereotype rating task. Participants provided their short-term versus long-term ratings of all targets, answered the brief asexuality questionnaire, and reported demographics. Upon finishing, participants were thanked and debriefed before returning to Prolific to receive their payment.

3.5 Results

The approach to analyzing and reporting results generally mirrors Study 1, using multilevel models throughout to nest ratings within participants, accounting for participant-level differences in responses. In addition to replicating and extending the analyses of Study 1, we additionally compare ingroup and outgroup attraction stereotypes to each other and to self-ratings. These analyses were feasible in Study 2 because we have adequate sample sizes across participant gender and sexuality cells.

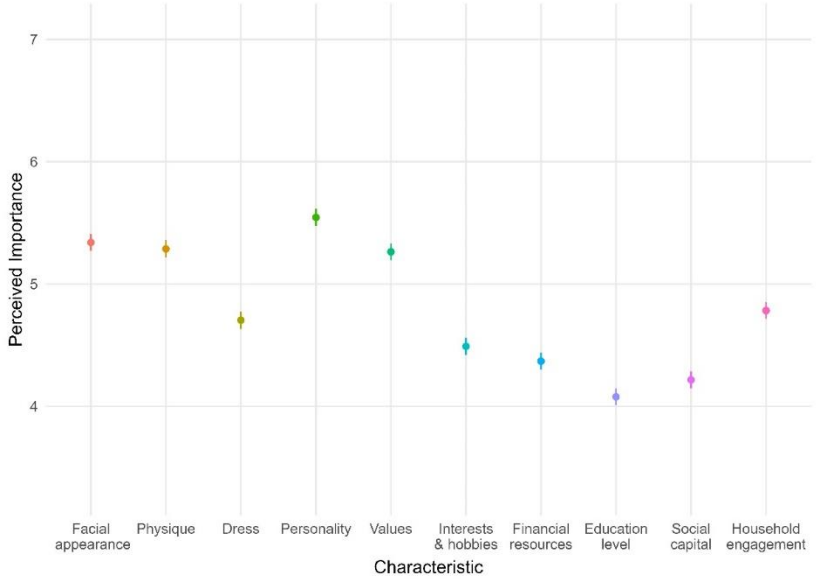
i. Stereotype Ratings

Attraction Stereotypes Averaged across all Target Groups. The first multilevel model fit predicted stereotyped importance ratings using only the characteristic variable, nested within participants. Participants held beliefs that other people, averaged across target groups, prioritize a potential partner's personality first, and to a lesser extent but still important, they place higher importance on the appearance of their partners' face, physique, and values. Household contributions and engagement and dress were perceived to be less important, but still more important than their the final four; interests and hobbies, financial resources, social capital, and education level. Means and confidence intervals for each stereotyped importance rating can be seen in Figure 4.

Attraction Stereotypes by Identity Group. We looked at the stereotypes for each characteristic by predicting importance rating using characteristic, gender, and sexual orientation as predictors, nested within participants. Ten models were used, an additional four for each of the new characteristics. Figure 5 illustrates the average importance placed on each respective trait according to perception ratings for each target group.

Figure 4

Attraction Stereotypes across all Target Groups



Facial appearance. Participants' attraction stereotypes for facial appearance were significantly predicted by target gender, $F(1, 2173) = 224.24$, $p < .001$, sexual orientation, $F(2, 2173) = 54.73$, $p < .001$, and their interaction, $F(2, 2173) = 17.05$, $p < .001$.

Participants' gender stereotypes were such that target groups of men were perceived as caring more than women about their partner's facial appearance. Straight target groups were stereotyped similarly, receiving higher importance ratings for facial appearance than gay and bisexual targets. Gay target groups were also seen as placing more importance on this than bisexual target groups. Gender stereotypes varied according to the target's sexual orientation as bisexual men and women were perceived to care a similar amount about facial appearance, but gay and straight men received considerably higher ratings than their respective target group of women. Furthermore, the effect of the gender stereotypes was even larger for gay target groups.

Physique. Participants' attraction stereotypes for physique were significantly predicted by target gender, $F(1, 2173) = 478.70$, $p < .001$, sexual orientation, $F(2, 2173) = 77.18$, $p < .001$, and their interaction, $F(2, 2173) = 31.96$, $p < .001$.

Target groups of men received stereotype ratings of physique's importance that were significantly higher than those received by target groups of women. Participants held sexual orientation stereotypes indicated by their perception ratings being significantly higher for straight and gay targets than bisexual targets. As was the case for perceptions of facial appearance's importance, the interaction resulted in a bigger effect of gender stereotypes when the targets were gay men and women: though straight men received the highest rating for perceived importance of physique in potential partners, gay men received the second highest rating while gay women received the lowest rating. Participants' stereotypes for gender-by-sexuality target groups were such that straight women were perceived to place a similar level of importance on their partner's physique as gay men.

Dress. Participants' attraction stereotypes for dress were significantly predicted by target gender, $F(1, 2173) = 30.11$, $p < .001$, sexual orientation, $F(2, 2173) = 52.25$, $p < .001$, and their interaction, $F(2, 2173) = 41.26$, $p < .001$.

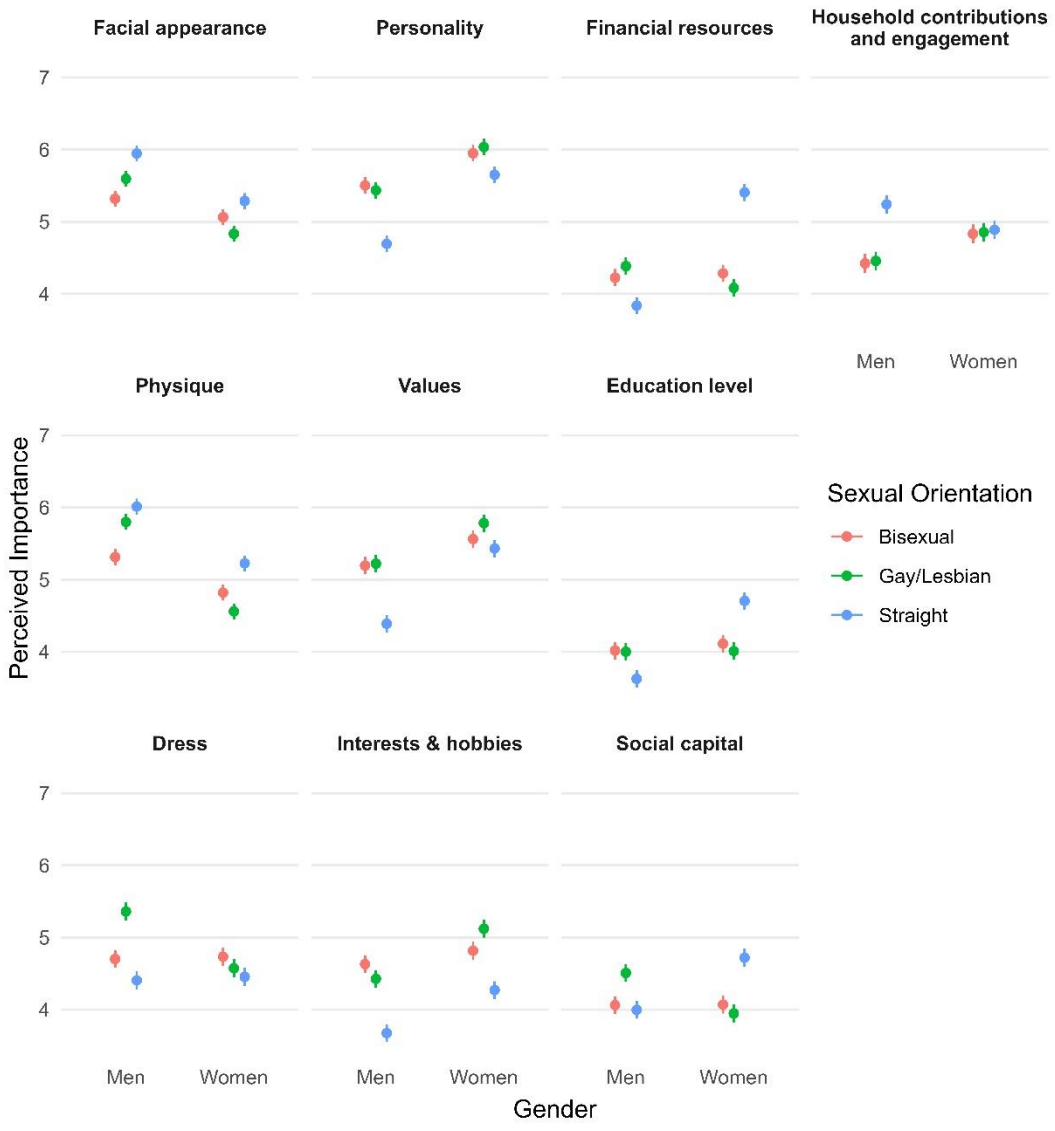
Stereotypes were stronger for sexual orientation than gender; gay targets received considerably higher dress importance ratings than bisexual or straight targets and straight targets were seen as caring even less than bisexual targets. Though the small effect of gender usually meant participants tended to give slightly higher ratings for dress to target groups of women, the effect of sexual orientation on gender meant that gay men received much higher dress importance ratings than any other target group.

Personality. Participants' attraction stereotypes for personality were significantly predicted by target gender, $F(1, 2173) = 288.10$, $p < .001$, target sexuality, $F(2, 2173) = 89.50$, $p < .001$, and their interaction, $F(2, 2173) = 14.86$, $p < .001$.

Stereotypes varied according to gender — target groups of women were perceived as prioritizing their partner's personality more than men — and sexual orientation — gay and bisexual target groups were perceived as prioritizing their partner's personality more than straight groups. Due to their combined effect, gay and bisexual men received similar personality importance ratings as straight women, whereas straight men were seen as caring much less about their partner's personality according to participant's perception ratings.

Figure 5

Attraction Stereotypes of Perceived Importance for Partner Traits according to Target Identity



Values. Participants' attraction stereotypes for values were significantly predicted by target gender, $F(1, 2173) = 244.59$, $p < .001$, sexual orientation, $F(1, 2173) = 73.66$, and their interaction, $F(1, 2173) = 22.90$, $p < .001$.

Participants' stereotypes were such that women received higher importance ratings than men for their partners' values. In fact, ratings for values were significantly higher for gay, straight, and bisexual women than for any group of men. Stereotype ratings also indicated that though bisexual and gay targets were perceived as both more discerning than straight targets when it comes to what their partners' values are, participants believed gay targets prioritize this slightly more than bisexuals. Straight men were viewed by participants as being markedly less concerned with potential partners' values.

Interests and hobbies. Participants' attraction stereotypes for interests and hobbies were significantly predicted by target gender, $F(1, 2173) = 146.76$, $p < .001$, sexual orientation, $F(1, 2173) = 162.66$, $p < .001$, and their interaction, $F(1. 2173) = 14.72$, $p < .001$.

Interests and hobbies were stereotyped as being more important to women than men and more important to LGB targets than straight targets. Gay women were stereotyped as prioritizing what their partners' interests and hobbies are more than any other group and straight men's perception ratings indicated participants thought they cared about their partners' hobbies and interests the least out of all target groups. Notably, straight women were viewed as less interested than gay or bisexual men.

Financial resources. Participants' attraction stereotypes for financial resources were significantly predicted by target gender, $F(1, 2173) = 122.63$, $p < .001$, sexual orientation, $F(2, 2173) = 39.73$, $p < .001$, and their interaction, $F(2, 2173) = 205.52$, $p < .001$.

Target groups of women were rated as caring appreciably more about their partner's financial resources than target groups of men, as were straight targets when compared to LGB targets thought the interaction effect was much larger. Straight women were stereotyped as prioritizing their partner's finances substantially more than all other groups, whereas straight men received the lowest perception importance ratings for financial resources.

Education level. Participants' attraction stereotypes for education level were significantly predicted by target gender, $F(1, 2173) = 112.78$, $p < .001$, sexual orientation, $F(2, 2173) = 6.30$, $p = .002$, and their interaction, $F(2, 2173) = 85.07$, $p < .001$.

Education level was perceived to be more important to women when they are picking a partner than to men. Similar to importance rating for financial resources, straight targets were viewed as caring more than LGB targets, but only slightly: the gender-by-sexuality combination determined importance ratings to a greater extent, as was the case for partner's resources. Straight women were viewed as placing more importance on education level when considering their attraction to someone than all other groups, but straight men were viewed as placing considerably less importance than the other target groups.

Social capital. Participants' attraction stereotypes for social capital was significantly predicted by target sexual orientation, $F(2, 2173) = 17.58$, $p < .001$. Despite gender not being a significant predictor, the gender-by-sexuality interaction was, $F(2, 2173 = 84.21$, $p < .001$.

On average, a partner's social capital was perceived as mattering most to gay target groups, slightly less to bisexual groups, and even less to straight targets. Crucially, this effect was largely qualified by the gender-by-sexuality interaction; although straight women and gay men were both stereotyped as placing a greater amount of importance on social capital than the other four target

groups, straight men and gay women were stereotyped as caring much less about someone's social capital than their sexuality group counterpart.

Household contributions and engagement. Participants' attraction stereotypes for household contributions and engagement were significantly predicted by target gender, $F(1, 2173) = 11.59$, $p < .001$, sexual orientation, $F(2, 2173) = 40.16$, $p < .001$, and their interaction, $F(2, 2173) = 32.21$, $p < .001$.

Women tended to receive higher importance ratings than men, but the larger effects involved the target group's sexual orientation. Higher importance ratings were given to straight target groups compared to LGB groups, but gender-by-sexuality stereotypes manifested in gay and bisexual men receiving lower importance ratings for a potential partner's household engagement than gay, bisexual, and straight women, yet straight men were stereotyped as caring remarkably more than any of them about household contributions and ambitions.

ii. Stereotype Ratings compared to Self-Report Ratings

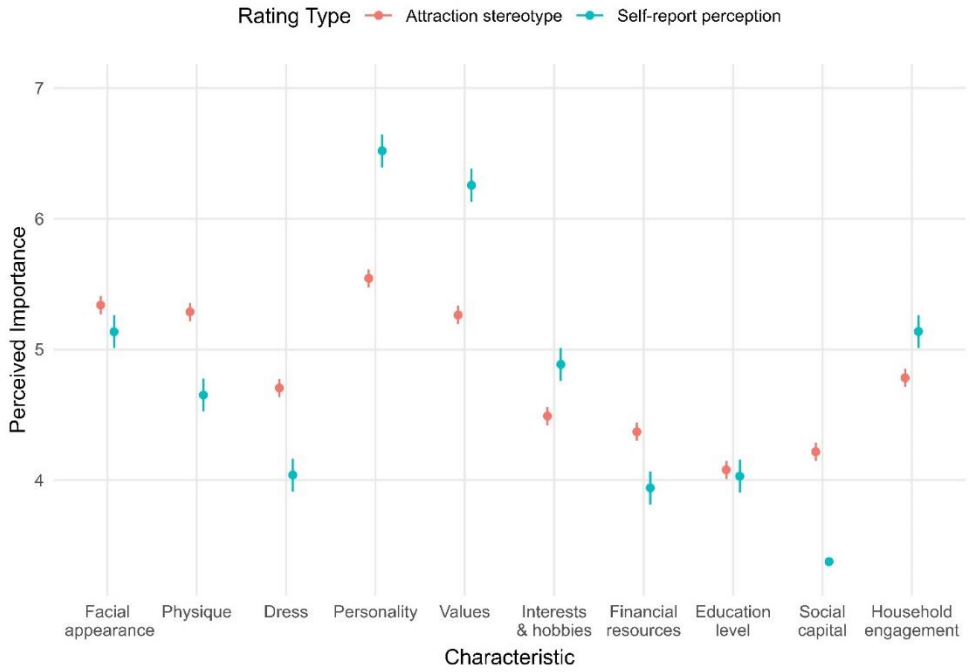
Attraction Stereotypes across Target Groups compared to Self-Report Ratings. When the rating type variable was reintroduced as a predictor for characteristic importance ratings, and the gender and sexual orientation of target groups was removed, the characteristic variable remained a significant predictor, $F(9, 30045) = 500.34$, $p < .001$, as well as its interaction with rating type, $F(9, 30045) = 111.37$, $p < .001$. The means and confidence intervals for the average self-rating and perception importance rating of each characteristic can be seen in Figure 6.

The pairwise contrasts between the self-report and stereotype ratings were significant for nine of the ten characteristics; only education level's ratings were similar for each rating type. Five characteristics were higher for stereotype ratings than for self-report ratings; facial appearance, physique, dress, financial resources, and social capital were all perceived to be less important in

determining one's own attraction than others. Conversely, participants' self-report ratings were higher than stereotype ratings for the following four qualities; values; interests and hobbies; household contributions and engagement.

Figure 6

Perceived Importance for Characteristics by Rating Type



Attraction Stereotypes Compared to Self-Report Ratings by Identity Group. As we did in Study 1, we examined the effect of rating type on the effect of characteristic within each of the six target groups, focusing on the interaction. However, due to the increased power from the larger number of participants who identified with each of the six gender-by-sexuality target groups, we were also able to explore the unique effects of outgroup versus ingroup stereotype ratings compared to self-perception ratings. We will go into more detail about the specific effects of rating type for ingroup, outgroup and self-perceptions of characteristics, instead of focusing on the overall effect of stereotype versus self-ratings. For details regarding the rating contrasts, the mean difference and higher rating type for each pairwise contrast can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5

Mean Difference for each Characteristic's Pairwise Contrast of Rating Type

	Bisexual men	Bisexual women	Gay men	Gay women	Straight men	Straight women
Facial appearance	−0.006	0.064	−0.209	0.083	**0.679*** **	**0.512*** **
Physique	**0.381***	**0.525****	**0.672****	0.025	**1.053*** **	**0.711*** **
Dress	**1.298*** **	**0.350***	**1.341*** **	**0.586*** **	**0.672*** **	**0.535*** **
Personality	**−0.823*** **	**−0.685*** **	**−0.737*** **	**−0.548****	**0.679*** **	**−0.848*** **
Values	**−0.762*** **	**−0.686*** **	**−0.777*** **	**−0.586*** **	**−1.536*** **	**−1.025*** **
Interests & hobbies	**−0.405***	−0.136	−0.199	0.134	**−1.255*** **	**−0.330****
Financial resources	**0.636*** **	0.218	0.125	< 0.001	**0.353***	**0.458****
Education level	0.191	−0.136	0.091	0.097	**−0.549*** **	0.046
Social capital	**0.631*** **	**0.571*** **	**1.056*** **	**0.793*** **	**0.554*** **	**0.786*** **
Household engagement	−0.324	**−0.461****	**−0.517****	−0.322	**0.654*** **	**−0.728*** **

p-value notation: .05*, .01**, < .001***

Higher rating type : Attraction stereotype Self-report perception

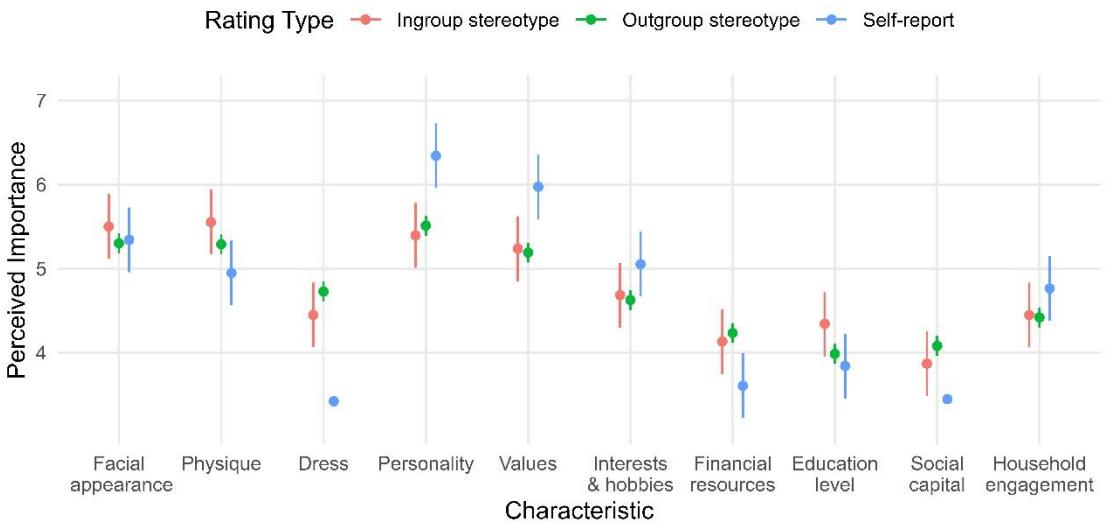
Ingroup and Outgroup Attraction Stereotypes compared to Self-Report Ratings.

In Study 1, we found that some ingroup stereotype ratings from straight men and women, gay men, and bisexual women significantly differed from their self-report ratings. Now, we will take a closer look at these differences and compare ingroup and outgroup stereotypes as separate rating types. Mean characteristic importance ratings and 95% confidence intervals for each rating type for each gender-by-sexuality group can be found in the relevant graph.

Bisexual men. Rating type significantly interacted with characteristic to predict perceived importance for bisexual men. $F(18, 4280) = 7.92$, $p < .001$, for bisexual men. Both outgroup and ingroup ratings were significantly higher than self-ratings for dress, financial resources, and social capital. Both ingroup and outgroup ratings were significantly lower than self-ratings for personality and values.

Figure 7

Ingroup, Outgroup and Self-Ratings of Characteristics' Importance to Bisexual Men



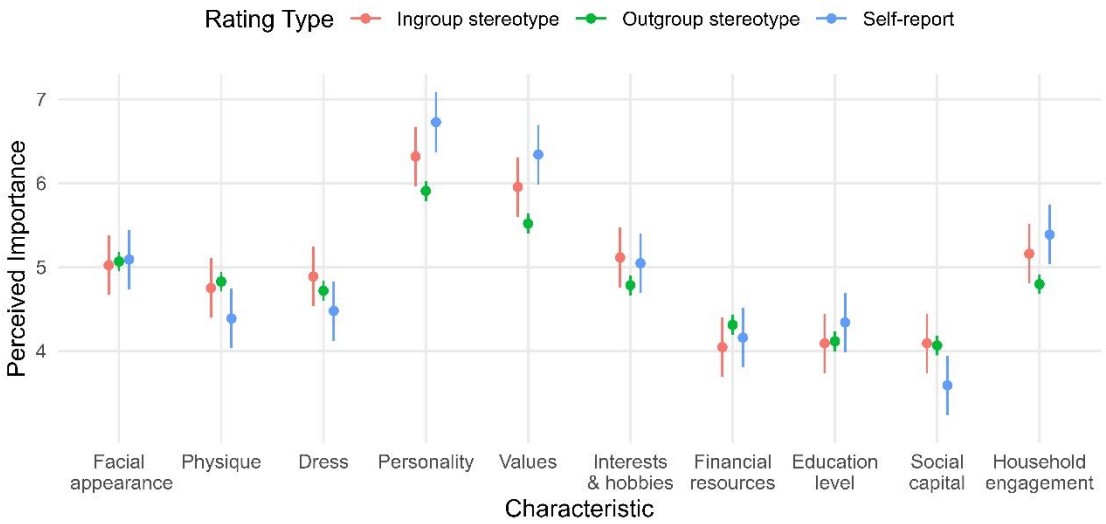
Ingroup stereotype ratings differed significantly from bisexual men's self-reported ratings for physique, dress, and personality. Bisexual men's ingroup ratings were consistently closer to self-report than outgroup stereotypes, but still significantly different for some characteristics. Although outgroup members perceived bisexual men to care significantly more about financial resources and social capital, bisexual men perceived ingroup members to care a similar amount about these traits as they perceive them to matter to themselves. However, bisexual men provided stereotype ratings for their own ingroup that were significantly higher for the importance of physique and dress than they perceive these to influence their own attraction. Bisexual men also self-reported caring more about their partner's personality than they stereotype other straight men as caring.

Bisexual women. The interaction between characteristics and rating type had a significant effect on ratings for bisexual women, $F(18, 4336) = 5.17$, $p < .001$. Outgroup members perceived physique and social capital to be more influential for bisexual women than they reported, though

the difference for the former was marginal, whereas bisexual women's self-ratings indicated they place a greater degree of importance on the personality, values, and household contributions of partners than outgroup members thought they did.

Figure 8

Ingroup, Outgroup and Self-Ratings of Characteristics' Importance to Bisexual Women

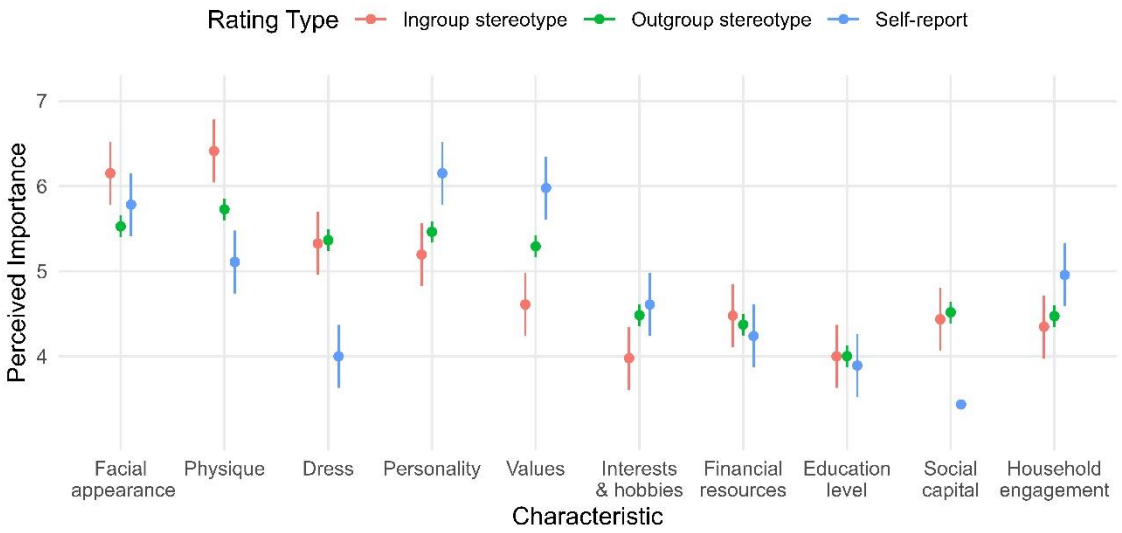


Ingroup members instead rated other bisexual women as placing a similar level of importance on physique, personality, and values as they themselves place. The only rating that differed between ingroup perceptions and self-report perception was for social capital, but only marginally, with bisexual women's self-ratings being lower for the importance of social capital than ingroup ratings.

Gay men. Gay men's importance ratings were significantly predicted by the interaction between characteristics and rating type, $F(18, 4346) = 12.\ 14$, $p < .001$. Outgroup member's ratings for gay men's prioritization of a partner's physique, dress, and social capital were significantly higher than their self-report ratings.

Figure 9

Ingroup, Outgroup and Self-Ratings of Characteristics' Importance to Gay Men

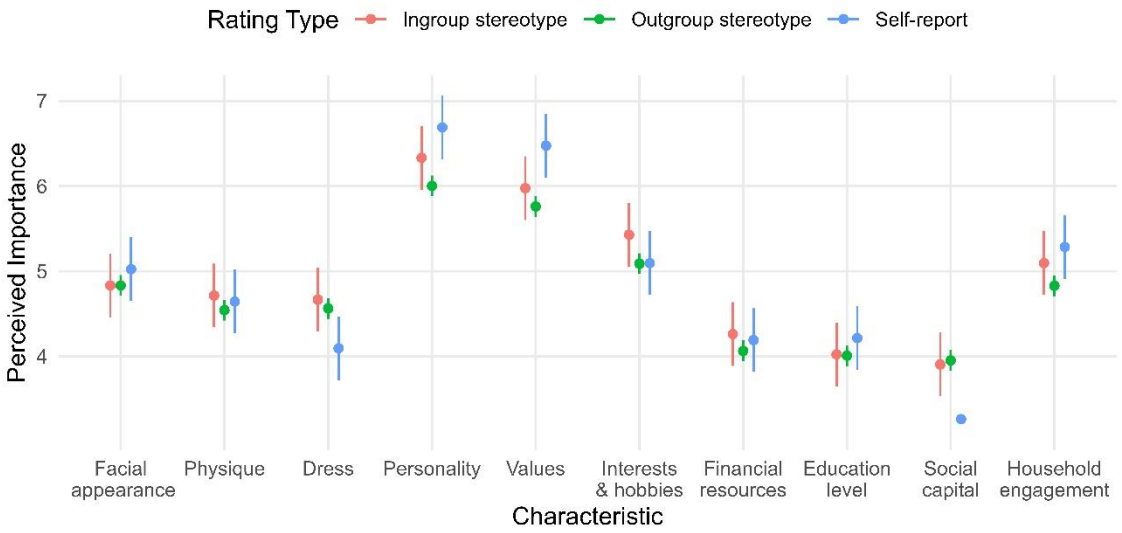


Gay men's ingroup ratings were also significantly higher for physique, dress, and social capital than their self-ratings; in fact, their ingroup ratings were further off from their self-ratings than the outgroup ratings for the importance of physique. Gay men agreed with outgroup members that personality, values, and household contributions matter less to gay men than they perceived these traits to matter to themselves and even gave lower stereotype ratings than outgroup members did for all three of these characteristics. Furthermore, unlike outgroup members, gay men's ratings for their ingroup as caring significantly less about their partner's hobbies and interests than they self-reported.

Gay women. Self-report, ingroup and outgroup stereotype ratings varied significantly by characteristic for gay women, $F(18, 4314) = 3.46$, $p < .001$. Gay women reported caring less about the way their partners dress and their social capital than outgroup and ingroup members thought they cared.

Figure 10

Ingroup, Outgroup and Self-Ratings of Characteristics' Importance to Gay Women



Conversely, outgroup and ingroup stereotype ratings were lower for gay women's concern about their partner's personality than gay women's ratings. Ingroup ratings were closer than outgroup ratings to gay women's self-report ratings for all three of these traits and though outgroup members underestimated the importance of a partner's values to gay women, ingroup ratings did not significantly differ from self-report for values.

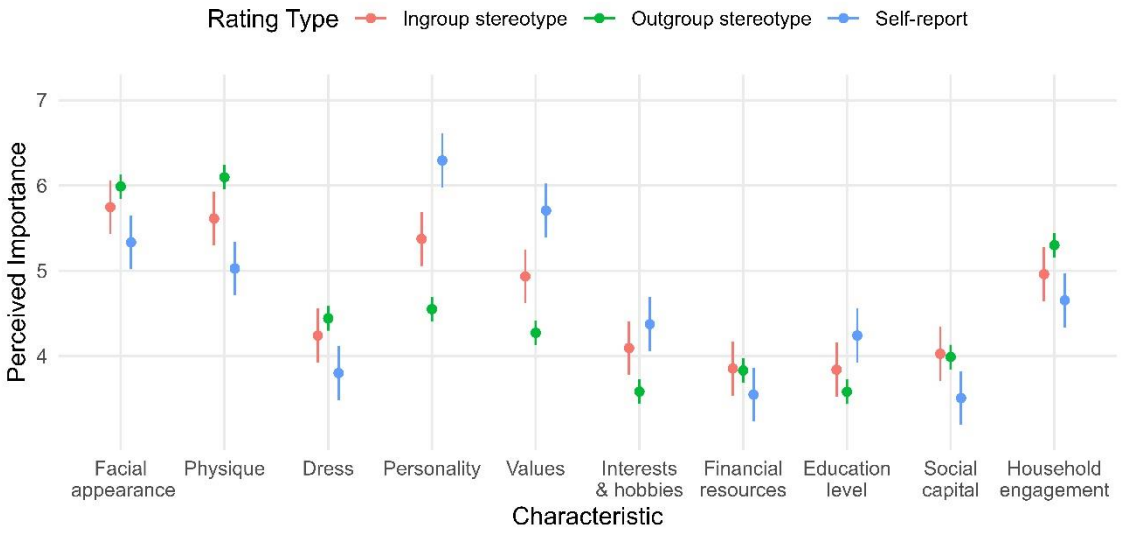
Straight men. Rating type interacted with characteristic ratings to produce a significant effect on the importance ratings given for straight men, $F(18, 4634) = 22.15$, $p < .001$. In fact, self-ratings were significantly different from outgroup ratings for all but one of the characteristics: financial resources. Self-report ratings were lower than outgroup ratings of straight men's care for their partners' facial appearance, physique, dress, social capital, and household contributions and engagement.

Straight men provided ingroup ratings that indicated they saw themselves as placing considerably less importance on physique, dress (marginally), and social capital than other straight men. Outgroup and ingroup stereotypes were reflected in significantly lower ratings of importance for personality and values

than straight men self-reported, and outgroup members held additional stereotypes that interests and hobbies, as well as education level, are less important than straight men self-report.

Figure 11

Ingroup, Outgroup and Self-Ratings of Characteristics' Importance to Straight Men

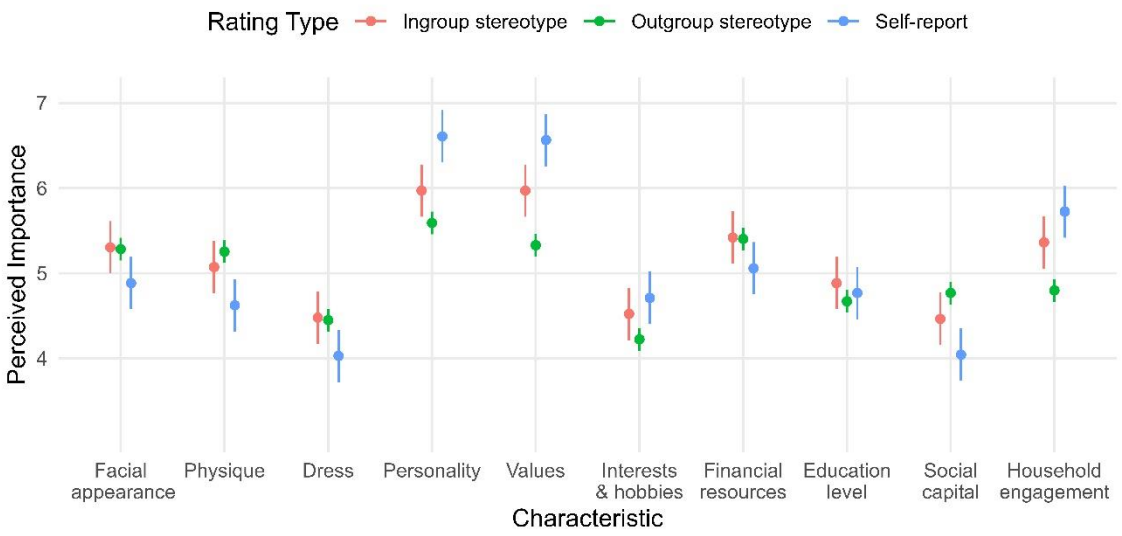


Straight women. Characteristic importance ratings had a significant combined effect with rating type on ratings given to straight women, $F(18, 4590) = 13.43$, $p < .001$. Ratings for the importance of partners' facial appearance, physique, dress, and social capital to straight women were higher when the rater was an outgroup member compared to self-report.

Straight women stereotyped their ingroup as placing a greater level of importance on a partner's physique and dress than they themselves place, but their ingroup ratings for the importance of facial appearance and social capital did not differ from straight women's self-report ratings. In contrast, ratings for the importance of partners' personality and values to straight women were higher when the rating type was self-report compared to both outgroup and ingroup ratings; straight women's self-ratings for interests and hobbies and household contributions and engagement were rated significantly less important than outgroup ratings but not ingroup ratings.

Figure 12

Ingroup, Outgroup and Self-Ratings of Characteristics' Importance to Straight Women



CHAPTER 4: GENERAL DISCUSSION

Attraction stereotypes are understudied in the literature, despite their likely influence on judgments and decision-making in romantic and sexual situations. Two studies systematically investigated attraction stereotypes related to people's preferences for ten partner characteristics, revealing the nuanced ways in which gender and sexual orientation intersect to shape these perceptions. We found large, gendered attraction stereotypes for straight men and women. Furthermore, gendered patterns of attraction stereotypes were reversed for some LGBTQ+ target groups, suggesting participants adhered to gender inversion stereotypes (Kite & Deaux, 1987) for some identity groups. Gay and bisexual men were stereotyped as placing similar levels of importance on personality and values as straight women. On the other hand, gay and bisexual women were perceived as placing even more importance on these characteristics than straight women and also perceived as placing less importance on physique and facial appearance than men.

We also compared self-ratings of attraction priorities to attraction stereotypes. Self-ratings tended to be self-enhancing, with participants giving higher self-ratings than stereotype ratings for personality and values — traits which could be judged as "meaningful" — and giving lower self-ratings for facial appearance and physique — traits which could be judged as "shallow."

Likewise, we found that importance perceived deviated according to ingroup and outgroup member identities; outgroup member's stereotype ratings were frequently further removed from the self-report ratings than ingroup member's stereotype ratings. This pattern occurred more often for gender-by-sexuality stereotypes about straight men and women, whereas specific stereotypes for groups like gay men were often more discrepant from the self-report ratings when the perceiver was an ingroup member.

4.1 Limitations

Because our studies asked participants to self-report group stereotypes as well as their own attraction priorities, social desirability is a concern. Some people may consider it shallow or offensive to indicate that they care more about potential partners' appearances than their personality or values and thus altered their ratings. However, the anonymity of participants in online samples like Prolific tend to demonstrate low levels of social desirability. One way to investigate the accuracy of participant's self-report ratings could be to use their qualitative interview data to pursue a closer examination of their honest feelings, although qualitative reporting can also be susceptible to social desirability.

One strength of our studies, particularly Study 2, was our oversampling from LGBTQ+ populations to investigate the responses of gay, lesbian, bisexual and non-binary participants. However, there is still more work to do be done in diversifying attraction research. Most notably, the role of asexuality in perceived importance of partner traits, both stereotyped and self-report types, was not investigated in the present work. Given the unique experiences of asexual individuals in attraction contexts, future steps will involve addressing this limitation.

Another limitation regarding generalizability is the role of culture. Participants were from many backgrounds, but data collection only occurred within Canada and the United States and therefore findings presented here may not be applicable to partner seeking or attraction stereotypes in other countries, particularly those with non-WEIRD populations (Henrich et al., 2010). That said, broader takeaways from this research (such as the intersectional nature of attraction stereotypes) would likely generalize in other cultural settings, albeit with different specific patterns. Future work might explore how patterns of attraction stereotypes and self-reported ratings differ across cultures.

4.2 Implications

The findings that we have reviewed from the present work reinforce existing calls for diversity in close relationships literature. Attraction stereotypes *and* self-reported partner priorities varied according to gender, sexual orientation, and their intersecting identity. Even the discrepancies between attraction stereotypes and self-ratings differ in size depending on the gender-by-sexuality identity group being considered. Our findings suggest that close relationship research that investigates gender differences must either (a) account for sexual orientation or (b) clearly state that their findings do not necessarily generalize beyond straight individuals.

Likewise, person perception literature must consider the ways intersectional identities result in unique judgements. We have provided evidence that people have highly complex mental schema about what matters to people when they are evaluating attraction, and these mental schemas vary as a function of group. Future work attempting to understand the causes behind dating behaviours, preferences, or judgements of others partner priorities, may look to attraction stereotypes based on gender, sexual orientation, and gender-by-sexuality groups as potential mechanisms.

Analyses comparing self-report and stereotype ratings suggest that most groups' self-perceptions of their own priorities are self-enhancing in comparison to their judgements of other's preferences. It is unclear the extent to which it is societal narratives that are diverging from these self-reported priorities and/or the extent that it is self-reported preferences that are divergent from the truth. Though this work does not address the accuracy of participant's self-report judgements, prior work has found that people are often unaware of (or unwilling to accurately report) the factors determining their attraction to others (Laner, 1977; Sprecher, 1989) and our work contributes to this literature. It is possible that people's judgements of their own attraction patterns are subject to

the better-than-average-effect, the phenomenon that describes people's tendency to perceive themselves as superior to average others and has been demonstrated to influence individuals' judgements of their abilities, attributes, and personality traits (Zell et al., 2020). Participants may have considered themselves better than others, including their own ingroup, in regard to how trivial or well-informed their partner priorities are.

Furthermore, introducing the contrast between ingroup and outgroup ratings illustrated that gaps between these distinct types of stereotype ratings and the self-report ratings differ between gender-by-sexuality groups, thus demonstrating that intergroup dynamics probably influence stereotype formation. In the cases of straight men and women, outgroup stereotypes tended to be more discrepant from self-report ratings than ingroup stereotypes. In contrast, ingroup stereotypes were occasionally further from self-report ratings for some characteristics for gay and bisexual men. These findings imply that depending on the group, intergroup judgements may sometimes be more similar to self-report judgements than one's own ingroup, particularly when the outgroup has little knowledge of a group's behaviours in a particular context such as dating.

4.3 Future Directions

i. The Role of Beliefs about Short- and Long-Term Relationship Preferences

In Study 2, we asked participants about their perceptions of the six gender-by-sexuality groups' tendencies to pursue short or long-term relationships. Differences in mating strategies, or people's tendencies to pursue short or long-term relationships as we refer to them, can play a large role in individuals' prioritization of which traits matter the most (Emond & Eduljee, 2014; Regan et al., 2000). Not only could these tendencies affect people's self-reported preferences, but they could also affect perceptions of others' partner priorities. For example, if people hold a stereotype that gay men tend to pursue short-term relationships instead of long-term, then they may assume

gay men care more about potential partners' appearance instead of their personality. Thus, the underlying assumption might not be that gay men care less about their partner's personality than people of other genders or sexual orientations but is actually that those who pursue short-term relationships care less about their partner's personality than those who pursue long-term relationships. However, this would only be logical if people hold stereotypes about which genders and sexual orientations tend to pursue short versus long-term relationships. We will use our already collected data to examine the role of self-reported tendencies and perceptions of target identities' tendencies toward these different kinds of relationships in attraction stereotypes. Understanding the basis of attraction stereotypes would help fill in some of the gaps about where these beliefs arise from and potentially offset past misconceptions about differences in partner preferences.

ii. The Predictive Value and Consequences of Attraction Stereotypes

Future work might also investigate the extent to which attraction stereotypes predict behaviours and judgments in dating and romantic contexts. Do people change their own behaviours when trying to get dates based on what they think someone of a particular gender and sexual orientation wants? Do people try to attract a specific person based on what they think *that one* person wants in a partner or is it based on what they think that gender/sexual orientation/gender-by-sexuality wants in a partner? Uniquely, do bisexual, pansexual or otherwise fluid people alter their dating behaviours depending on which target group they are trying to attract? Demonstrating these types of effects would clarify how important attraction stereotypes are for understanding behaviours.

Similarly, future work might study the effect of attraction stereotypes on intergroup judgements. It is likely that these attraction stereotypes predict positive and negative judgements of outgroup members; for example, are groups, like straight men, perceived as more shallow or

conceited than other groups as a result of the stereotype that they care more about physical appearances than others? Are straight women perceived as the same as a result of the stereotype that they care more about financial resources than others? These could possibly even extend to judgements of people's partners, such as someone presuming their lesbian coworker has an unattractive partner because they stereotype gay women as caring much less about looks. Stereotypes that are unique to the ingroup should also be studied for their effect on ingroup judgements.

It is likely important to study the predictive validity and effects of attraction stereotypes in dating behaviours and judgements in tandem with one another as they likely affect one another. Because dating is an inherently social behaviour, attempts to attract someone will always involve ingroup and/or outgroup members. In other words, whether it is a straight man attempting to attract a straight woman, vice versa, a bisexual man or woman attempting to attract someone of the "opposite" sex, or a non-binary individual attempting to attract a man or a woman, these behaviours will be occurring in an intergroup context. Even bisexual people who are dating someone of the same sex may be in an intergroup relationship as their partner could be straight or gay and thus not be of the same sexual orientation. On the other hand, gay men and women are often dating within their ingroup. Therefore, it would likely be beneficial to study how attraction stereotypes' effect on global positive and negative judgements consequentially impacts dating behaviours.

iii. The Gap between Self-Report and Attraction Stereotypes

Possible mechanisms for the discrepant ratings between self-report and stereotype ratings should be considered in future work. One explanation could be that the self-enhancing effect discussed under implications extends to one's ingroup member's partner priorities. Ingroup may

be being somewhat protected from the influence of gendered narratives and sexual orientation stereotypes in the mind of the perceiver as they consider the ingroup member to be more similar to themselves — someone who is less shallow and more thoughtful than others. However, this may not make sense when the ingroup ratings are less favourable than the outgroup ratings, as is the case with gay men receiving higher ratings for the importance of facial appearance and physique from ingroup members than outgroup members. It could be that gay men are less worried about endorsing these stereotypes about their ingroup, whereas others might be concerned about appearing judgmental of an LGBTQ+ group and therefore not comfortable to use gay stereotypes in their ratings.

Alternatively, it is possible that the attraction stereotypes identified in the ingroup and outgroup ratings are simply reflections of the stereotypes presented in common romantic and sexual scripts. Heterosexual scripts dominate discussions of partner seeking and close relationships to the point that they inform interpretations of LGBTQ+ relationships, such as in the case of gay couples being asked which partner fills the role of the man or woman of the house. It is plausible that heterosexual individuals are unaware of the stereotypes that exist only within queer contexts, while LGBTQ+ individuals are well aware of stereotypes within heterosexual culture. Thus, while ingroup and outgroup ratings of straight men and women are similar, ingroup ratings for LGBTQ+ target groups may have been borne out of stereotype knowledge unique to queer communities.

Our data provides some support for this hypothesis as many of the strongest stereotypes seen in our analyses relate to specific heterosexual stereotypes, such as overestimating straight men's prioritization of a partner's physique, facial appearance, and household contributions and engagement, as well as straight women's prioritization of a partner's financial resources and social capital. Gaining a better understanding of why these discrepancies exist could contribute to a more

comprehensive understanding of how stereotypes influence partner preferences, or vice versa, particularly across different social groups.

4.4 Conclusion

Finding the right partner is a complex endeavor. Pursuing what one finds attractive while simultaneously attempting to be desirable to a stranger according to one's beliefs about the desires of others makes the process of dating, relationships, and even sex more confusing— especially because people tend to think others prioritize different characteristics than the self. Attraction stereotypes may contribute to romantic and sexual contexts where everyone is assuming they know what others want but may barely know what they want for themselves.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Stereotype and Self-Rating Matrices Example

Stereotype ratings example:

For each of the characteristics below, please indicate how important you think that characteristic is to a **bisexual woman** when they consider their attraction to someone else.

Appearance of their face	not at all important	2	3	somewhat important	5	6	extremely important
Appearance of their physique	not at all important	2	3	somewhat important	5	6	extremely important
Clothing style	not at all important	2	3	somewhat important	5	6	extremely important
Personality	not at all important	2	3	somewhat important	5	6	extremely important
Values	not at all important	2	3	somewhat important	5	6	extremely important
Hobbies / interests	not at all important	2	3	somewhat important	5	6	extremely important

Self-report ratings example:

For each of the characteristics below, please indicate how important you think that characteristic is to **you** when you consider your attraction to someone else.

Appearance of their face	not at all important	2	3	somewhat important	5	6	extremely important
Appearance of their physique	not at all important	2	3	somewhat important	5	6	extremely important
Clothing style	not at all important	2	3	somewhat important	5	6	extremely important
Personality	not at all important	2	3	somewhat important	5	6	extremely important
Values	not at all important	2	3	somewhat important	5	6	extremely important
Hobbies / interests	not at all important	2	3	somewhat important	5	6	extremely important

Appendix B

Definitions Provided to Study 2 Participants

