

1 Preferences for sexually dimorphic body characteristics revealed in a large sample of speed
2 daters

3

4

Abstract

5 While hundreds of studies have investigated the indices that make up attractive body shapes,
6 these studies were based on preferences measured in the lab using pictorial stimuli. Whether
7 these preferences translate into real-time, face-to-face evaluations of potential partners is
8 unclear. Here 539 (275 female) participants in 75 lab-based sessions had their body
9 dimensions measured before engaging in round-robin speed dates. After each date they rated
10 each other's body, face, personality, and overall attractiveness, and noted whether they would
11 go on a date with the partner. Women with smaller waists and lower waist-to-hip ratios were
12 found most attractive, and men with broader shoulders and higher shoulder-to-waist (or hips)
13 ratios were found most attractive. Taller individuals were preferred by both sexes. Our results
14 show that body dimensions associated with greater health, fertility, and (in men)
15 formidability influence face-to-face evaluations of attractiveness, consistent with a role of
16 intersexual selection in shaping human bodies.

17 Keywords: Body shape; intersexual selection; mate preferences; speed-dating; physical
18 attractiveness

19

20 Preferences for sexually dimorphic body characteristics revealed in a large sample of speed
21 daters

22 Bodies are centrally important to sexual attractiveness. A fundamental tenet in
23 theories of human mate choice is that romantic preferences have evolved to attend to traits
24 that were important in ancestral environments. The clearest examples of these traits are those
25 that reflect large sex differences in stature, muscularity, and body fat composition. For
26 example, in women, a lower waist-to-hip ratio and lower body mass index are associated with
27 greater reproductive value, i.e. youth (Lassek & Gaulin, 2018); in men, height and shoulder
28 width have been associated with greater physical strength (Archer & Thanzami, 2009) and
29 perceptions of both physical and social dominance (Dijkstra & Buunk, 2001; Stulp, Buunk,
30 Verhulst, & Pollet, 2015).

31 Previous studies investigating the association of a body's shape with its appeal to a
32 viewer have shared one common feature: the models have always been inert stimuli presented
33 on screens or on paper. This raises several questions. To what extent do these preferences
34 translate into real-time, face-to-face evaluations of opposite-sex partners? Are there
35 preferences that are not captured by on-screen judgements? And, how much do bodily
36 features actually affect our attraction to real people, who have faces and personalities as well
37 as bodies?

38 **What makes a body attractive?**

39 Singh's (1993) landmark study reported that men rated female stimuli of average
40 body weight with the lowest WHR (.70) as youngest, healthiest, and most attractive. These
41 findings were replicated in several Western populations (Koscinski, 2014; Thornhill &
42 Grammer, 1999), small-scale societies (Dixson, Dixson, Bishop, & Parish, 2010; Singh,
43 Dixson, Jessop, Morgan, & Dixson, 2010; but also see: Douglas & Shepard Jr, 1998;
44 Marlowe & Wetsman, 2001), and in research measuring men's visual attention and neural

45 reward responses (Dixson, Grimshaw, Linklater, & Dixson, 2011; Platek & Singh, 2010). In
46 men, height, shoulder width, and muscularity are positively associated with physical strength
47 and health (Archer & Thanzami, 2009; Lassek & Gaulin, 2009). Women also judge muscular
48 and v-shaped physiques as more attractive than over-lean or corpulent body types (Dixson,
49 Grimshaw, Ormsby, & Dixson, 2014; Frederick & Haselton, 2007; Mautz, Wong, Peters, &
50 Jennions, 2013). High body mass index (BMI) is associated with low attractiveness in both
51 sexes, but the association is complicated by the covariance of BMI with more specific body
52 measures such as muscle mass and waist circumference (Chinedu et al., 2013).

53 **Artificial stimuli may be problematic**

54 Though there is much research into the determinants of body attractiveness, the
55 studies to date have many limitations. The stimuli in the studies described above have ranged
56 from line drawings (e.g. Singh, 1993, 1995), to photographs (e.g. Koscinski, 2014), 3D
57 rotations of body scans (e.g. Brooks et al., 2010), videos of inert figures (e.g. Rilling,
58 Kaufman, Smith, Patel, & Worthman, 2009), and popular cartoon characters (Lassek &
59 Gaulin, 2016). The use of artificial stimuli in the studies investigating body attractiveness has
60 been criticised for conflating WHR and BMI (Tovee, Maisey, Emery, & Cornelissen, 1999),
61 and obscuring abdominal depth (Rilling et al., 2009). Importantly, the nature of the stimuli
62 has been shown to affect the manifestation of preferences (Koscinski, 2014), reinforcing the
63 importance of the match between stimuli and the mating situations of interest.

64 Of course, until recent times human mate evaluation did not rely on stimuli on a
65 computer screen but on face-to-face interactions. There are several reasons why in-person
66 evaluations might differ from ratings of stimuli on a computer screen. First, overall body size
67 (i.e. height) is impossible to properly appreciate from a small image on a screen; this is
68 especially relevant given the importance of body size in mate choice in animals (Bercovitch,

69 1989; Serrano-Meneses, Córdoba-Aguilar, Méndez, Layen, & Székely, 2007; Shine et al.,
70 2000) and apparently in humans too (Stulp & Barrett, 2016). Second, models used as stimuli
71 in previous studies investigating body attractiveness have worn form-fitting attire (e.g.
72 Koscinski, 2014) or been completely naked (Thornhill & Grammer, 1999), and in all cases
73 their faces were obscured. These procedures were designed to isolate the effects of body
74 variation, but in doing so they departed far from reality and made it impossible to determine
75 the importance of body variables to overall attractiveness when other relevant factors (e.g.
76 face, personality, clothing) are varying too, as is the case in real life mate evaluation (Lee,
77 Dubbs, Von Hippel, Brooks, & Zietsch, 2014). Third, real life interactions involve moving
78 bodies, which could be perceived quite differently from inert bodies (even if it is a 3D image
79 rotating so it can be seen from all angles). Natural movement can change the perception of
80 physical features – indeed several studies have shown modest or absent correlations between
81 attractiveness ratings of the same faces in static and dynamic conditions (Lander, 2008;
82 Penton-Voak & Chang, 2008; Rubenstein, 2005; but see Kościński, 2013). Fourth, attraction-
83 related cognitive processes elicited by in-person interactions are thought to be different from
84 those elicited by stated preferences (Todd, Penke, Fasolo, & Lenton, 2007). This difference
85 may relate to the cold-to-hot empathy gap (Eastwick & Finkel, 2008), which refers to the idea
86 that individuals who are not currently in a state of arousal (such as strong attraction) have
87 limited insight into the effect this arousal will have over their behaviour when it arises
88 (Loewenstein, 2005). Participants observing a picture or video of an inert body are unlikely to
89 experience the same arousal levels as when interacting in the physical presence of the person
90 they are evaluating, so the same principles may apply to these contexts. However, recently
91 the same pattern of results has been shown in friendship formation, which is less likely to
92 involve hot affect than relationship formation, suggesting that the problem may be more
93 complex (Huang, Ledgerwood, & Eastwick, in press).

94 Speed-dating paradigms offer a way to test the importance of specific traits in mate
95 choice during ecologically valid face-to-face mating contexts (Finkel, Eastwick, & Matthews,
96 2007; Kurzban & Weeden, 2005, 2007; Lenton, Fasolo, & Todd, 2009; Lenton &
97 Francesconi, 2011). In speed-dating scenarios, people engage in brief interactions (3-5
98 minutes) with previously unknown people during which romantic interests can be gauged.
99 Despite their advantages, speed-dating paradigms have rarely been used to examine the
100 influence of objectively measured facial/bodily traits. In one study, male speed-daters with
101 wider faces, a cue to social dominance and aggressiveness (Geniole, Denson, Dixson, Carré,
102 & McCormick, 2015) were preferred as short-term mates (Valentine, Li, Penke, & Perrett,
103 2014). In other speed-dating studies, height was found attractive in men only (Asendorpf,
104 Penke, & Back, 2011), in both sexes (Stulp, Buunk, Kurzban, & Verhulst, 2013), or in neither
105 sex (Luo & Zhang, 2009). Additionally, there is some evidence that lower weight (Luo &
106 Zhang, 2009) and lower BMI (Asendorpf et al., 2011) are attractive in women only. These
107 results suggest that speed-dating is a valuable paradigm for physical attractiveness research;
108 however, selection for physical traits is undoubtedly multivariate, which places high value on
109 studies that include multiple objective measures of physical traits. Studies measuring
110 shoulders, waist, and hips are particularly valuable as they allow for analysis of body shape
111 rather than body size.

112 **The present study**

113 Existing research leaves the following questions unanswered: 1) How do body
114 dimensions influence judgements of body attractiveness in face-to-face interactions? 2) How
115 important is body attractiveness relative to face and personality attractiveness? 3) Do these
116 implicit preferences shape the explicit choices made by speed-daters? Answering these
117 questions is crucial to understanding how variation in bodies, and in particular body

118 dimensions, might affect mate selection in natural scenarios like those that have shaped our
119 evolution.

120 To address these questions we used a speed-dating paradigm in which opposite-sex
121 participants rated each other's body, face, personality, and overall attractiveness. The
122 participants' body dimensions were also measured, and using linear mixed effects modelling
123 we investigated the association of each body dimension, as well as several sexually
124 dimorphic ratios, with body attractiveness ratings. Similarly, we investigated the relative
125 importance of body, face, and personality attractiveness to overall attractiveness. We also
126 investigated the importance of these features in deciding whether to go on a date with their
127 partner. Lastly, to investigate whether these preferences are sex-differentiated, we tested for
128 moderation by sex in all analyses.

129 **Material and methods**

130 **Participants**

131 Participants were 539 (275 female) first year psychology students with ages ranging
132 from 16.67 to 46.08 (females: $M = 19.14$, $SD = 2.68$; males: $M = 19.83$, $SD = 3.11$).

133 Participants were recruited from the University of Queensland's first year research
134 participation scheme and were offered one credit for their participation in a study titled
135 'Speed-meeting study'. Requested volunteers were 1) heterosexual, 2) not in a committed
136 relationship, and 3) open to answering personal questions regarding their sexual history (for
137 questions not relating to the current study). Participants were assured of confidentiality as
138 well as being told at regular intervals that they may discontinue/omit answers without
139 forgoing credit. The participants included in this study are a subset (collected during 2012,
140 2013, 2014, and 2015) of an ongoing 'attraction study' (2010-present). The subset was
141 selected based on availability of all measures necessary for the present study. Sample size

142 was determined each year by how many participants could be tested in the available time
143 frame. All relevant data available at the start of preparing the paper were included. Statistical
144 power in a sample of this size (2161 interactions) is strong, but specific calculations are
145 difficult because of the complex multi-level, cross-classified design. From this subset,
146 participants who were classed as outliers (± 3.29 SD) on one or more body dimensions were
147 removed (8 males, 7 females).

148 **Materials**

149 Participants completed three questionnaires: *pre-questionnaire*, *speed-date*
150 *questionnaire*, and *post-questionnaire*. The *pre-questionnaire* contained self-report items
151 including participant height. The *speed-date questionnaire* contained ratings of partners'
152 body attractiveness, facial attractiveness, personality attractiveness, and overall
153 attractiveness. Each of the partner attractiveness (face, body, personality, overall) items were
154 asked in the format of 'I would rate their ____ attractiveness as...' These ratings were made
155 on a 7-point response scale ranging from 1 = Not at All Attractive to 7 = Extremely
156 Attractive. Additionally, participants were asked whether they would hypothetically go on a
157 date with the partner in the format of 'Would you go on a date with this person? (Y/N)'. The
158 *post-questionnaire* contained items unrelated to this study. We also collected body weight,
159 but it (and BMI) were not included in the main analyses because they are largely captured by
160 the girth variables and height – indeed, when included weight did not predict body
161 attractiveness above and beyond height, waist, hips, and shoulders (see supplementary
162 material, S1).

163 **Procedure**

164 Depending on attendance, speed-dating sessions consisted of two to five males and
165 two to five females. Prior to the speed-dates, participants were separated by sex and

166 completed the *pre-questionnaire*. Once finished, the group was brought together and
167 participants were assembled at five ‘stations’ within the laboratory. Each station had two
168 opposite-facing chairs for the partners. Participants were then told they would be given three
169 minutes to interact with an opposite sex partner. Participants spoke about any topic until they
170 heard a bell which indicated the date had ended. After hearing the bell, participants were then
171 instructed to begin completing the *speed-date questionnaire*. All participants were reminded
172 to hold their clipboards up to avoid their partner seeing their ratings. Experimenters
173 supervised the room to determine when all participants had finished completing ratings. The
174 process outlined above was then repeated until all opposite-sex dyads had interacted. If there
175 was an uneven ratio of males and females, the extra participant(s) were instructed to sit
176 quietly for three minutes during one or more rounds. Once all speed-dates and ratings had
177 been completed, participants began completing the *post-questionnaire*. During this time,
178 participants were taken aside one at a time by a female experimenter and their body
179 dimensions (shoulders, waist, hips) were measured using a tape measure. Waist and hips were
180 defined as the narrowest and widest points of the lower torso (including buttocks),
181 respectively. Shoulders were measured at the widest point of the shoulder area. All three
182 dimensions were measured as circumferences.

183 **Analysis**

184 The nature of the design (i.e. participants rating multiple partners) creates
185 dependencies in the data. The rating from each interaction between two people (Level 1) is
186 cross-classified within both the participant receiving the rating (Level 2), and the partner who
187 gave the rating (Level 2), all of which is nested within the session they both attended (Level
188 3). Therefore, it is necessary to use multilevel modeling (MLM) to account for the
189 hierarchical structure of the data. To check that MLM was appropriate, intraclass correlations
190 were examined at each level for both body and overall attractiveness (see Table 1).

191 As all intraclass correlations were significant, indicating clustering at each level, we
 192 proceeded with MLM analyses. We used the statistical software ‘R’, along with packages
 193 ‘lme4’ (Bates, Mächler, Bolker, & Walker, 2014) and ‘lmerTest’ (Kuznetsova, Brockhoff, &
 194 Christensen, 2017), for these analyses.

195 Table 1

196 *Intra-class correlations for Bodily Attractiveness and Overall Attractiveness each level:*
 197 *Participant (Level-1), Partner (Level-2), and Session (Level-3).*

Levels	Women Rating Men		Men Rating Women	
	Estimate (CI)	N	Estimate (CI)	N
<i>Bodily Attractiveness</i>				
Participant (Target)	.35 (.28-.41)	275	.30 (.24-.37)	290
Partner (Perceiver)	.31 (.25-.38)	287	.25 (.19-.32)	275
Session	.17 (.11-.24)	75	.11 (.07-.17)	75
<i>Overall Attractiveness</i>				
Participant (Target)	.28 (.21-.34)	275	.25 (.19-.32)	290
Partner (Perceiver)	.33 (.26-.39)	287	.22 (.16-.28)	275
Session	.13 (.09-.20)	75	.06 (.03-.11)	75

Note: The intra-class correlation represents the extent to which scores on the dependent variables ‘cluster’ within each level of aggregation. The intra-class correlation for *participant* represents the extent to which ratings received by a particular participant are more similar to each other than to ratings received by other participants. *Partner* indicates the extent to which ratings given by a particular partner are more similar to each other than ratings given by other participants. *Session* indicates the extent to which ratings received by participants in a particular session are more similar to each other than ratings received by participants in other sessions.

198 **Results**

199 Figure 1 shows scatterplots of the associations of height, and hip, shoulder, and waist
 200 circumference with bodily attractiveness. MLM analyses with partner ratings of
 201 attractiveness (body, facial, personality, overall) at Level-1, participant dimensions
 202 (shoulders, waist, hips, height) at Level-2, and session group at Level-3 were used to evaluate
 203 main effects and interactions. Unless otherwise specified, all models reported are maximal
 204 models (Barr, Levy, Scheepers, & Tily, 2013). Prior to analysis, variables that were used as
 205 denominators in ratios were converted to proportions for conceptual clarity (Kronmal, 1993).



206

207 *Figure 1.* Scatterplots depicting the relationship between body dimensions in centimetres (X) and average bodily attractiveness rating provided
 208 by speed-dating partners (Y) for each body dimension.

209 All variables were then mean centred using their sex-specific mean. The means and
 210 standard deviations (prior to mean centring) for all Level-1 and Level-2 variables are reported
 211 in Table 2.

212 Table 2

213 *Means and standard deviations for male and female targets on all Level-1 and Level-2*
 214 *variables.*

Variables	Male Targets		Female Targets	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Level-1 (Partner Ratings)				
Bodily Attractiveness	4.31	1.01	4.66	0.92
Facial Attractiveness	4.18	0.98	4.50	0.88
Personality Attractiveness	5.09	0.76	5.28	0.68
Overall Attractiveness	4.58	0.79	4.77	0.76
Level-2 (Participant)				
Shoulders	114.97	7.90	100.47	6.29
Waist	80.66	8.36	71.55	6.29
Hips	97.47	8.55	93.79	7.19
Height	180.18	7.27	165.82	7.06

Note: All attractiveness ratings were made on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1-7 (midpoint: 4). All body dimensions were measured in centimetres.

215

216 **What makes a male body attractive?**

217 Previous research investigating male body attractiveness has emphasised the
 218 importance of the shoulder-to-hip and shoulder-to-waist ratios. Interaction terms were
 219 favoured over ratios because ratios can cause spurious relationships and produce
 220 unacceptable collinearity with their constituent variables (Kronmal, 1993). These interaction
 221 terms conceptually correspond to ratios, but with more appropriate statistical properties, and
 222 will hereupon be referred to as ratios to simplify wording. All variables were standardised to
 223 a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1 before being entered into equations, to ease

224 comparison of coefficients across body dimensions. The γ coefficients for both male models
 225 are reported in Table 3.

226 Table 3

227 *Male MLM Models for Rated Bodily Attractiveness: Models are named for the variables they*
 228 *include. The first row contains univariate models estimating main effects for each body*
 229 *measurement. The second row contains multivariate models with interaction terms*
 230 *representing well-known ratios as well as main effects for their constituent variables.*
 231 *Multivariate models including all main effects can be found in supplementary materials (S2).*

232

Main Effect Only Models												
	Shoulders			Waist			Hips			Height		
Predictors	γ	SE	p	γ	SE	p	γ	SE	p	γ	SE	p
Shoulders	0.12	0.05	.007	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Waist	-	-	-	.00	0.05	.992	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hips	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.02	0.04	.615	-	-	-
Height	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.16	0.04	<.001

Interaction Models												
	Shoulders by Hips			Shoulders by Waist			Waist by Hips			Waist by Height		
Predictors	γ	SE	p	γ	SE	p	γ	SE	p	γ	SE	p
Shoulders	0.21	0.05	<.001	0.38	0.06	<.001	-	-	-	-	-	-
Waist	-	-	-	0.28	0.06	<.001	-0.01	0.06	.913	0.07	0.04	.100
Hips	0.07	0.05	.144	-	-	-	-0.07	0.06	.238	-	-	-
Height	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.2	0.04	<.001
Interaction	0.27	0.04	<.001	0.27	0.03	<.001	-0.25	0.04	<.001	0.09	0.05	.070

Note: Waist is inverted, with positive coefficients indicating that smaller values are preferred.

233 We found that taller men with broader shoulders were rated as having more attractive
 234 bodies. Interaction terms in the shoulder-to-waist and shoulder-to-hips models were
 235 significant, suggesting that a higher shoulder-to-waist or shoulder-to-hip ratio has a positive
 236 effect on attractiveness beyond the individual effects of having broad shoulders or narrow
 237 waist/hips. Additionally, the interaction term in the waist-by-hips model was significant,

238 suggesting that a lower waist-to-hips ratio has a positive effect on attractiveness beyond the
 239 individual effect of having a narrow waist.

240 **What makes a female body attractive?**

241 Previous research investigating female body attractiveness has emphasised the
 242 importance of the waist-to-hip and waist-to-height ratios. The γ coefficients for both female
 243 models are reported in Table 4.

244 Table 4.

245 *Female MLM Models for Rated Bodily Attractiveness: Models are named for the variables*
 246 *they include. The first row contains univariate models estimating main effects for each body*
 247 *measurement. The second row contains multivariate models with interaction terms*
 248 *representing well-known ratios as well as main effects for their constituent variables.*
 249 *Multivariate models including all main effects can be found in supplementary materials (S2).*

250

<i>Rated Bodily Attractiveness</i>												
Main Effect Only Models												
	Shoulders			Waist			Hips			Height		
Predictors	γ	SE	<i>p</i>	γ	SE	<i>p</i>	γ	SE	<i>p</i>	γ	SE	<i>p</i>
Shoulders	-0.11	0.05	.015	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Waist	-	-	-	0.19	0.05	<.001	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hips	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.15	0.05	.002	-	-	-
Height	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.11	0.04	.011
Interaction Models												
	Shoulders by Hips			Shoulders by Waist			Waist by Hips*			Waist by Height		
Predictors	γ	SE	<i>p</i>	γ	SE	<i>p</i>	γ	SE	<i>p</i>	γ	SE	<i>p</i>
Shoulders	-0.05	0.05	.341	0.13	0.06	.033	-	-	-	-	-	-
Waist	-	-	-	0.33	0.06	<.001	0.21	0.05	<.001	0.25	0.04	<.001
Hips	-0.13	0.05	.009	-	-	-	0.00	0.05	.924	-	-	-
Height	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.14	0.04	<.001
Interaction	-0.01	0.04	.872	0.12	0.04	.005	0.10	0.03	.003	0.04	0.05	.453

Note: Waist and Hips are inverted, with positive coefficients indicating that smaller values are preferred.

* Maximal model did not converge, random intercept only model used.

251 We found that taller women with narrower waists, hips, and shoulders were rated as
252 having more attractive bodies. The interaction term in the Waist-to-hip model was significant,
253 suggesting a lower waist-to-hip ratio has a positive effect on attractiveness beyond the
254 individual effect of having a narrow waist. Additionally, the interaction term in the shoulders-
255 to-waist model was significant, suggesting that having a higher shoulder-to-waist ratio has a
256 positive effect on attractiveness beyond the individual effect of having a narrow waist.
257 Though the shoulders coefficient is negative in the univariate model, it is positive in the
258 shoulder-to-waist model where both waist and shoulder-to-waist ratio are controlled; this may
259 suggest that the negative coefficient observed in the univariate model is driven by collinearity
260 between shoulders and waist. Additional multivariate models for both women and men can be
261 seen in supplementary materials (S2).

262 **Are there truly sex differences in body preferences?**

263 As the pattern of results appeared to differ by sex, we combined the male and female
264 samples and tested for moderation of the effects by sex (see Table 5). Several sex differences
265 emerged: the attractiveness of broader shoulders and broader hips was greater in men,
266 whereas the attractiveness of narrower waists was greater in women. Unexpectedly, men and
267 women preferred taller partners to a similar degree. Additionally, the positive influence of
268 higher shoulder-to-waist or shoulder-to-hips ratios on attractiveness was greater in men.
269 Unexpectedly, the positive influence of lower waist-to-hip ratios was also greater in men.

270

271 Table 5.

272 *Unisex MLM Models for Rated Bodily Attractiveness: Models are named for the variables they include. The first row contains univariate models*
 273 *estimating main effects for each body measurement. The second row contains multivariate models with interaction terms representing well-*
 274 *known ratios as well as main effects for their constituent variables. Multivariate models including all main effects can be found in*
 275 *supplementary materials (S2).*

Main Effect Only Models												
	Shoulders			Waist			Hips			Height		
Predictors	γ	SE	p	γ	SE	p	γ	SE	p	γ	SE	p
Shoulders	0.00	0.03	.885	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Waist	-	-	-	0.10	0.03	.003	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hips	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.07	0.03	.023	-	-	-
Height	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.13	0.03	<.001
Sex	0.13	0.03	<.001	0.13	0.03	<.001	0.14	0.03	<.001	0.14	0.03	<.001
Sex Interaction	-0.11	0.03	<.001	0.09	0.03	0.001	-0.08	0.03	.008	-0.03	0.03	.337

Interaction Models												
	Shoulders by Hips			Shoulders by Waist			Waist by Hips			Waist by Height		
Predictors	γ	SE	p	γ	SE	p	γ	SE	p	γ	SE	p
Shoulders	0.07	0.03	.044	0.26	0.04	<.001	-	-	-	-	-	-
Waist	-	-	-	0.31	0.04	<.001	0.11	0.04	.002	0.15	0.03	<.001
Hips	-0.09	0.03	.007	-	-	-	0.06	0.04	.140	-	-	-
Height	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.15	0.03	<.001
Sex	0.06	0.04	.087	0.05	0.04	.138	0.07	0.04	.048	0.13	0.03	<.001
Shoulders*Sex	-0.11	0.03	.001	-0.11	0.04	.013	-	-	-	-	-	-
Waist*Sex	-	-	-	0.01	0.04	.898	0.09	0.04	.017	0.08	0.03	.005
Hips*Sex	-0.04	0.03	.217	-	-	-	-0.05	0.04	.225	-	-	-
Height*Sex	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.02	0.03	.430
Focal Interaction	-0.12	0.03	<.001	0.18	0.03	<.001	0.17	0.03	<.001	0.04	0.03	.140
Focal Interaction*Sex	0.11	0.03	<.001	-0.07	0.02	.008	-0.07	0.03	.012	-0.01	0.03	.607

276

277 **How important is body attractiveness?**

278 Table 6 shows that individuals' bodies were important to their overall attractiveness in
279 dynamic interactions with real people – something that had not been directly demonstrated
280 before. A model including a sex interaction term for each individual predictor (e.g. *Bodily*
281 *Attractiveness*Sex*) showed that body attractiveness ($p = .010$) and facial attractiveness ($p =$
282 $.015$) were more important to female attractiveness than to male attractiveness. On the other
283 hand, personality attractiveness was more important to male attractiveness than to female
284 attractiveness ($p < .001$). Full results of this analysis can be found in the supplementary
285 materials (S3).

286 Table 6.

287 *MLM γ coefficients for associations between body attractiveness and overall attractiveness.*

Predictors	Rated Overall Attractiveness (1-7)	
	γ (SE)	
	Male Targets	Female Targets
Bodily Attractiveness	0.26 (0.02)***	0.32 (0.02)***
Facial Attractiveness	0.32 (0.02)***	0.40 (0.02)***
Personality Attractiveness	0.44 (0.02)***	0.32 (0.02)***

Note: *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

288 **Do these preferences shape speed-date choices?**

289 To determine whether the pattern of results identified for the bodily attractiveness and
290 overall attractiveness variables was consistent with their speed-dating choices, the same
291 analyses were repeated with the Date variable. For male targets, all associations were
292 consistent with previous analyses (see Table 7).

293

294 Table 7.

295 *Male MLM Models for Date (Y/N): Models are named for the variables they include. The first*
 296 *row contains univariate models estimating main effects for each body measurement. The*
 297 *second row contains multivariate models with interaction terms representing well-known*
 298 *ratios as well as main effects for their constituent variables.*

Main Effect Only Models												
	Shoulders			Waist			Hips			Height		
Predictors	γ	SE	p	γ	SE	p	γ	SE	p	γ	SE	p
Shoulders	0.24	0.10	.022	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Waist	-	-	-	0.00	0.11	.968	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hips	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.05	0.11	.630	-	-	-
Height	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.38	0.10	<.001

Interaction Models												
	Shoulders by Hips			Shoulders by Waist			Waist by Hips			Waist by Height		
Predictors	γ	SE	p	γ	SE	p	γ	SE	p	γ	SE	p
Shoulders	0.40	0.12	.001	0.75	0.17	<.001	-	-	-	-	-	-
Waist	-	-	-	0.55	0.17	.001	-0.04	0.15	.783	0.10	0.11	.353
Hips	0.20	0.12	.104	-	-	-	0.01	0.15	.930	-	-	-
Height	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.42	0.11	<.001
Interaction	0.42	0.13	.002	0.54	0.15	<.001	-0.38	0.13	.003	-0.12	0.1	.226

Note: Waist is inverted, with positive coefficients indicating that smaller values are preferred.

299 For female targets, main effects were consistent with the exception of the positive
 300 effect for narrower hips, which was no longer significant. Additionally, the positive influence
 301 of lower waist-to-hip ratios and higher shoulder-to-hips ratios were no longer significant (see
 302 Table 8).

303

304 Table 8

305 *Female MLM Models for Date (Y/N): Models are named for the variables they include. The*
 306 *first row contains univariate models estimating main effects for each body measurement. The*
 307 *second row contains multivariate models with interaction terms representing well-known*
 308 *ratios as well as main effects for their constituent variables.*

309

<i>Date Yes/No</i>												
Main Effect Only Models												
	Shoulders			Waist			Hips			Height		
Predictors	γ	SE	<i>p</i>	γ	SE	<i>p</i>	γ	SE	<i>p</i>	γ	SE	<i>p</i>
Shoulders	-0.17	0.12	.148	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Waist	-	-	-	0.29	0.12	.018	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hips	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.17	0.13	.208	-	-	-
Height	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.22	0.11	.041
Interaction Models												
	Shoulders by Hips			Shoulders by Waist			Waist by Hips			Waist by Height		
Predictors	γ	SE	<i>p</i>	γ	SE	<i>p</i>	γ	SE	<i>p</i>	γ	SE	<i>p</i>
Shoulders	-0.17	0.14	.207	0.07	0.17	.679	-	-	-	-	-	-
Waist	-	-	-	0.41	0.16	.013	0.37	0.15	.011	0.39	0.12	.001
Hips	-0.09	0.13	.498	-	-	-	0.12	0.14	.413	-	-	-
Height	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.29	0.12	.013
Interaction	0.18	0.12	.125	0.05	0.13	.688	0.15	0.12	.197	0.14	0.11	.210

Note: Waist and Hips are inverted, with positive coefficients indicating that smaller values are preferred.

* Maximal model did not converge, random intercept only model used.

310

311 In terms of sex differences, the effect of broader shoulders was still greater in men;
 312 however, there was no longer a sex difference for narrower waists. Additionally, the positive
 313 influence of higher shoulder-to-waist or shoulder-to-hips ratios was still greater in men;
 314 however, there was no longer a sex difference for lower waist-to-hip ratios (see Table 9).

316 *Unisex MLM Models for Date (Y/N): Models are named for the variables they include. The first row contains univariate models estimating main*
 317 *effects for each body measurement. The second row contains multivariate models with interaction terms representing well-known ratios as well*
 318 *as main effects for their constituent variables.*

Main Effect Only Models												
	Shoulders			Waist			Hips			Height		
Predictors	γ	SE	p	γ	SE	p	γ	SE	p	γ	SE	p
Shoulders	0.01	0.08	.904	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Waist	-	-	-	0.16	0.08	0.046	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hips	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.10	0.08	.203	-	-	-
Height	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.30	0.09	<.001
Sex	0.36	0.09	<.001	0.37	0.09	<.001	0.37	0.09	<.001	0.38	0.09	<.001
Sex Interaction	-0.20	0.08	.010	0.13	0.08	.089	-0.05	0.08	.476	-0.08	0.07	.246

Interaction Models												
	Shoulders by Hips			Shoulders by Waist			Waist by Hips			Waist by Height		
Predictors	γ	SE	p	γ	SE	p	γ	SE	p	γ	SE	p
Shoulders	0.10	0.09	.307	0.41	0.12	.001	-	-	-	-	-	-
Waist	-	-	-	0.49	0.12	<.001	0.16	0.10	.111	0.24	0.08	.002
Hips	-0.15	0.09	.094	-	-	-	0.07	0.10	.478	-	-	-
Height	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sex	0.23	0.10	.018	0.19	0.10	.056	0.29	0.10	.005	0.40	0.09	<.001
Shoulders*Sex	-0.28	0.09	.002	-0.31	0.12	.010	-	-	-	-	-	-
Waist*Sex	-	-	-	-0.11	0.12	.329	0.19	0.10	.067	0.12	0.08	.113
Hips*Sex	0.05	0.09	.586	-	-	-	0.05	0.10	.629	-	-	-
Height*Sex	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.08	0.08	.300
Focal Interaction	-0.07	0.09	.418	0.26	0.09	.004	0.25	0.08	.001	0.01	0.07	.892
Focal Interaction*Sex	0.29	0.09	.002	-0.22	0.09	.009	-0.09	0.08	.251	0.13	0.07	.083

Note: Waist is inverted, with positive coefficients indicating that smaller values are preferred.

320 Individuals' bodies were still predictive of their likelihood of receiving a date, as were
 321 their faces and personalities; however, there were no longer any sex differences ($ps > .16$),
 322 see Table 10.

323 Table 10.

324 *MLM γ coefficients for associations between body attractiveness and date (Y/N).*

Predictors	Date (Y/N)	
	γ (SE)	
	Male Targets	Female Targets
Bodily Attractiveness	0.13 (0.04)**	0.17 (0.04)***
Facial Attractiveness	0.32 (0.04)***	0.36 (0.04)***
Personality Attractiveness	0.25 (0.03)***	0.19 (0.03)***

Note: *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

325

326

Discussion

327 Previous research into the visual determinants of bodily attractiveness has used
 328 images of inert, faceless bodies on a computer screen or sheet of paper. Here, using 75 lab-
 329 based speed-dating sessions, we estimated attractiveness of various body dimensions based
 330 on ratings in 2161 live, face-to-face interactions. In line with previous findings, our more
 331 ecologically valid study showed that women with smaller waists and lower WHRs were
 332 found more attractive, and taller men with broader shoulders and lower shoulder-to-hips (or
 333 waist) ratios were found more attractive. Contrary to recent studies that suggested WHR does
 334 not contribute to attractiveness above and beyond a narrow waist (Brooks, Shelly, Jordan, &
 335 Dixson, 2015; Lassek & Gaulin, 2016), our results indicate that WHR does make a
 336 significant unique contribution to female attractiveness, though its effect is much smaller than
 337 absolute waist circumference. By contrast, the male shoulder-to-waist (or shoulder-to-hip)
 338 ratio has a strong influence on male attractiveness, with an interaction term much larger than
 339 the female WHR.

340 We found that broad shoulders and a high shoulder-to-waist or shoulder-to-hips ratio
341 were more attractive in men than in women, consistent with intersexual selection contributing
342 to the large sex difference in these features. We also found a sex difference in the degree to
343 which men and women prefer low WHRs; however, this was in the opposite direction to what
344 we would have expected a priori, with women preferring lower WHRs to a stronger degree.
345 Importantly, this does not indicate that women prefer waist-to-hip ratios more extreme in men
346 than men prefer in women, but rather that women prefer a lower waist-to-hip ratio relative to
347 the male specific norm than men do relative to the female specific norm. Though previous
348 research in this area has placed greater emphasis on the theoretical reasons for preferring low
349 WHRs in women, higher WHRs have been associated with erectile dysfunction in men
350 (Giugliano et al., 2004; Heidler et al., 2007; Zambon et al., 2010). We also did not find the
351 predicted sex difference in height preferences. Women's height has generally not been
352 associated with attractiveness in previous studies using on-screen models (but see Brooks et
353 al., 2015; Rilling et al., 2009), and sex differences in height preference have been found in
354 many other self-reported preference studies, which generally find that women prefer above-
355 average to tall men while men prefer average-height women (reviewed by Courtiol,
356 Raymond, Godelle, & Ferdy, 2010). Further, women self-report valuing height more than do
357 men (Buss & Barnes, 1986). However, because body height cannot be properly appreciated
358 on a screen or sheet of paper, previous findings may have reflected participants' stereotypes
359 about what is attractive in men and women more than their actual preferences (Ledgerwood,
360 Eastwick, & Smith, 2018). Also, awareness of preferences could be limited if it is a correlate
361 of height – such as long legs (Brooks et al., 2015) – that is attractive in women rather than
362 height *per se*. As well as indicating formidability, which is thought to be beneficial mainly to
363 men (Puts, 2010), tallness might be preferred as an indicator of general condition (Perkins,
364 Subramanian, Davey Smith, & Özalpin, 2016), which is beneficial to both sexes.

365 For the first time, we demonstrated the importance of body attractiveness when
366 judging potential partners in real-time. We showed that body attractiveness is important to the
367 overall attractiveness of both sexes, even when other cues such as facial and personality
368 attractiveness vary. Also, our results demonstrated that body and facial attractiveness are
369 more important to men than to women, whereas personality attractiveness is more important
370 to women than to men. These findings are consistent with Sexual Strategies Theory (Buss &
371 Schmitt, 1993) and cross-cultural self-report findings (Buss, 1989) that physical features rank
372 higher in men's preferences than in women's. Nonetheless, our study has several limitations.
373 First, participants were university students who opted into a speed-dating study. It is therefore
374 possible that our sample contained men and women who were more confident in dating
375 scenarios and thus potentially more physically attractive than the general population.
376 However, both sexes used the full body attractiveness scale, suggesting that – in the eyes of
377 participants – their partners spanned the full range of body attractiveness. Second,
378 participants' evaluations were based on three minute interactions with opposite sex partners.
379 It is possible that personality ratings, relative to body and facial ratings, would have been
380 more influential if participants had greater knowledge of participants' personalities. In this
381 way, our estimate regarding proportion of overall attractiveness attributed to body
382 attractiveness may be specific to short interactions. Additionally, as our attractiveness ratings
383 were general (i.e. not specified as short- or long-term contexts) it is not possible to determine
384 the context participants had in mind when rating partners. Third, our sample contained only
385 young, Western undergraduate students, and so we do not make claims about the universality
386 of these results. Fourth, this study used linear modeling. While it is highly likely that these
387 relationships are non-linear when extreme values are included (e.g. malnourished and obese
388 individuals), they did not significantly depart from linearity within the range of body types of
389 participants in our study. Correlation tables for all included variables can also be seen in

390 Supplementary material S4. Fifth, the speed-dating paradigm necessitates that one sex is
391 seated while the other sex ‘rotates’ from partner to partner. When seated, it is difficult to
392 appreciate height. To test whether this influenced our results, we counterbalanced the rotating
393 sex and ran *height by rotating sex* interactions (see supplementary material S5). No
394 interaction term was significant, thereby suggesting that the time participants spent unseated
395 (e.g. milling outside and walking into the room) was sufficient, or that height can be
396 adequately perceived in the sitting position. Last, though using interaction terms in place of
397 ratios is statistically more sound, this prevented us from using known comparison points that
398 are specific to ratios (e.g. WHR .70). To address this, we have provided supplementary
399 figures (S6) that show body attractiveness as a function of all of the included ratios. For
400 WHR, we also include comparison points for the ideal ratios for both men (.90) and women
401 (.70)

402 Future research examining body attractiveness should evaluate both sexes regardless
403 of whether their hypotheses are sex-specific. Although examining the attractiveness of
404 women’s dimensions and men’s dimensions in separate studies can be informative, the
405 numerous differences in study design and sampling make between-sex comparisons difficult.
406 Without between-sex comparisons, it is not possible to conclude that a trait is preferred by
407 one sex in particular; as illustrated with our height example, the case may be that it is
408 preferred by both sexes similarly. Evolutionary explanations are often shaped by ideas about
409 traits being preferred more strongly (or exclusively) by one or the other sex, so it is important
410 to routinely include both sexes in studies testing evolutionary hypotheses. Furthermore,
411 though our findings largely support findings from studies using inert stimuli, we encourage
412 more mate-preference research involving face-to-face human interactions to ensure that
413 conclusions from computer-based studies apply in more ecologically valid situations.

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