

**Attractiveness and objectification: How these impact forgiveness and trait
perception**

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Abstract

Literature has highlighted the positive relationship between attractiveness and forgiveness, due to positive attributes ascribed to attractive people. Also noted, is the positive relationship between attractiveness and objectification. How a person's objectification of others would influence their reaction to a transgression committed by an attractive person remains unclear. Additionally, whether there is a notable difference between male and female subjects is unknown. The current study was an exploratory analysis, which examined whether objectification moderated the relationship between attractiveness and forgiveness, and whether this differed for males and females. Using a 2 x 2 x 2 experimental design, a fictional offender's attractiveness was experimentally manipulated using facial stimuli, resulting in four experimental conditions, (1) male participant and attractive offender, (2) male participant and unattractive offender, (3) female participant and attractive offender and (4) female participant and unattractive offender. 251 participants took part in an online survey, involving a hypothetical transgression embedded within a Tinder date scenario and were required to indicate attitudes towards their transgressor. They also completed a modified version of Noll and Frederickson's (1998) Self-Objectification Questionnaire, which measured their objectification of others. No interaction was found between attractiveness and objectification on forgiveness and trait perception of the transgressor.

Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree of diploma in any University, and, to the best of my knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published except where due reference is made. I give permission for the digital version of this thesis to be made available on the web, via the University of Adelaide's digital thesis repository, the Library Search and through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the School to restrict access for a period of time.

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CHAPTER 1:

Attractiveness and objectification: How these impact forgiveness and trait perception

Being attractive is accompanied by countless advantages. In accordance with the “what is beautiful is good” stereotype, attractive people are ascribed positive personality traits, have greater luck on the dating scene, and are more likely to be forgiven for a transgression. Research suggests that a possible negative effect of this phenomena is objectification – those who are attractive are more sexualized and thus receive a greater degree of objectification. However, objectification exists in two forms – state (result of sexualized target) and trait (individual characteristic) objectification. Objectifiers dehumanize their targets: reducing them to the status of an object with no emotionality and agency. What is yet to be determined, is how these two phenomena interact with one another, specifically in the case of a transgression.

1.1 Defining Attractiveness

Physical attractiveness can be broadly defined as the extent to which an individual is considered aesthetically pleasing and as a result, evokes a positive reaction from another (Cristofaro, 2017). Universally, societies have adopted an unequivocal standard of attractiveness, to which they use to evaluate the physical appearance of individuals (Adams, 1977). The appearance of a person can be assessed via a number of different physical components, including but not limited to, their face and facial characteristics, body type and body shape, weight and weight distribution, and age. Across sexes and sexual orientations, ages, ethnic groups and cultures, and socioeconomic backgrounds, there appears to be a high level of consistency among

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individuals regarding what constitutes physical attractiveness (Maestripieri, Klimczuk, Traficonte & Wilson, 2014; Thornhill & Gangestad, 1999). Thornhill & Gangestad (1999) report that typically, correlations between raters' judgments of attractiveness fall within the 0.3 and 0.5 range. Further, there is even a considerable agreement in ratings of facial attractiveness, both within and between societal groups with little to no contact with Western beauty standards (Thornhill & Gangestad, 1999).

Typically, a person's weight, age and facial characteristics are the main determinants of whether they are considered attractive. Lennon (1988) found that, as a general rule, thinner people are considered more attractive than heavier people, and those who are younger are considered more attractive than their older peers. The studies on facial characteristics however, present far more multifaceted results. It is generally agreed upon that, in a woman, an attractive face consists of large eyes, a small nose, high cheekbones, smaller lower facial area and full lips (Thornhill & Gangestad, 1999). In addition to this, other facial characteristics that are proposed to influence attractiveness, in both genders, include facial symmetry, masculinity and femininity, available cues to personality and power, and skin quality (Maestripieri et al., 2014). These facial features possess subtle information through which reflect an individual's general health (Thornhill & Gangestad, 1999). In terms of the distinction between attractive and unattractive people, Thornhill & Gangestad (1999) add "the discrimination reflects special purpose adaptations responsive to cues that had make value in evolutionary history". This apparent universally shared view on physical attractiveness could suggest species-typical psychological adaptations (Thornhill & Gangestad, 1999). Thus, evolutionary research is the force behind a great deal of

studies on facial attractiveness, with a focus on mate attraction and mating strategies (Maestripieri et al., 2014).

1.2 Importance of physical appearance in society

The physical appearance of an individual, and in particular one's face, provides an extensive array of social cues to the observer (Awasthi, 2017). While a range of body parts provide an observer with essential information about an individual's characteristics, research has indicated that the key information needed for initial impression formation is provided through their face (Riemer et al., 2017). Instantaneously, an individual's face provides an observer with information to assess their gender, age and ethnicity, allowing them to categorize the individual into social categories, accordingly. Social category memberships are essential to forming first impressions in interpersonal interactions, as they effortlessly provide the observer with a wealth of information regarding the individual, based on past experiences and preconceived ideas regarding that particular category (Riemer et al., 2017).

Also critical to initial impression formation, is the tendency to attribute mental states to an individual (Awasthi, 2017). This ability is called mentalizing, or Theory of Mind, and requires an observer to utilize the external cues presented by an individual, such as their facial appearance, to infer their mental states, i.e., their personality, emotional state, intentions, beliefs, and desires (Awasthi, 2017; Riemer et al., 2017). This ability is essential to understanding others and in turn, for the development of social communications and relationships with them (Awasthi, 2017). These perceptions of both social category memberships and internal traits, can critically construct the ways in which observers form impressions of an

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individual, and subsequently, interact with them (Riemer et al., 2017). In turn, research indicates that these initial judgments of physical attractiveness and their accompanying attributes, has a substantial affect on both friendship and mate choice (Thornhill & Gangestad, 1999).

1.3 Importance of attractiveness

1.3.1 Benefits in daily life

A plethora of studies in social science have explored the effect of physical appearance, and in particular, facial attractiveness, on how one assigns traits to another individual. Reis et al. (1982) highlight that the vast majority of these studies examine first impressions of unknown individuals, in which case limited information about them is available. A consistent finding among these studies is that differential expectations of the attributes of an individual are stimulated according to the degree of their perceived attractiveness (Adams, 1977). Such expectations can be explained by the phenomenon called the “Beauty Halo effect”, which is also referred to as the “What is Beautiful is Good” stereotype (Chelnokova et al., 2014; Tagai, Ohtaka & Nittono, 2016) This stereotype suggests that, in most situations, humans cannot help but be positively biased towards attractiveness, where attractive people are both judged and treated more favorably than their less attractive peers (Chelnokova et al., 2014; Tagai et al., 2016) Examples of this concept have been demonstrated in a myriad of studies in the social sciences over the years. For example, it has been indicated that there is a common assumption that, when compared to unattractive people, attractive people have more likeable personalities, greater abilities and higher moral standards (Lennon, 1988; Tagai et al., 2016). Similarly, in a study conducted by Maestriperi et al. (2014), a correlation was found between high facial attractiveness

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and four positive personality traits: extraversion, friendliness, openness to experience and self-confidence or security. In addition, physical attractiveness has been shown to have a positive effect on an individual's popularity (Rowatt, Cunningham & Druen, 1999), how memorable and recognizable they are (Tagai et al., 2016), rate of peer acceptance and self-esteem (Adams, 1977), task evaluation (Lennon, 1988; Rollero & Tartaglia, 2016), and hiring preferences (Lennon, 1988). This effect has even been demonstrated in children, where attractive children are better liked than their less attractive peers (Adams, 1977).

1.3.2 Dating success

Unsurprisingly, an individual's attractiveness has a substantial effect on their dating success. When selecting a date, people have an overwhelming desire to choose an individual who they perceive as physically attractive (Rowatt et al., 1999). In a study by Rowatt et al. (1999), when given the preference, participants were more likely to date the more physically attractive option, in comparison to the less physically attractive option, and this finding appeared regardless of their sex. In another study, Walster, Aronson, Abrahams & Rottman (1966) demonstrated that the largest determinant of the likelihood of an individual being asked on a date is their physical attractiveness. Reis et al. (1982) suggest that the reason for attractive people being preferred as heterosexual interaction partners, is due to them being evaluated positively on a wide range of characteristics, which thus supports the "What is Beautiful is Good" effect. While everyday interactions between individuals are important, the dating scene holds great significance as usually, it is characterized by the intention of choosing potential mating partners. From an evolutionary perspective, the act of choosing a potential mate is executed with the intention of increasing gene

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propagation, and in turn, promoting one's genetic survival through successful reproduction (Thornhill & Gangestad, 1999). Thus, it would follow; that individuals have an implicit motivation to choose a mating partner based on their fertility.

The level of fertility one possesses determines the reproductive value of an individual. A woman's level of estrogen, the primary female sex hormone, indicates her ability and readiness to reproduce, thus exhibiting her fertility (Thornhill & Gangestad, 1999). The necessary information about characteristics that are highly valued in potential mating partners, such as health, reproductive value and possession of resources, can be determined through an individual's face (Maestripieri et al., 2014). While more evidence is required, research suggests that feminine facial features are dependent on a woman's estrogen levels (Thornhill & Gangestad, 1999). High levels of estrogen in a woman usually result in large lips and upper cheek area, as well as small lower face area (Thornhill & Gangestad, 1999). Predictably, a study by Thornhill & Gangestad, (1999) indicated that the faces that were rated most attractive consisted of more feminine features, and were overall more feminine, than average.

It is this evidence that lead to the inception of the concept of one's "Mating Value". Phillips & Hranek (2012) define one's mating value as their overall attractiveness, both physical and otherwise, in comparison to other potential mating options on the current "market". As expected, attractive people, and in particular women, consistently receive higher ratings of mating value (Phillips & Hranek, 2012). Also considered in measuring one's mating value, is their level of social desirability, which is essentially the sum of a person's social assets, weighted by their salience in society (Berscheid, Dion, Walster & Walster, 1971). Important factors included in determining one's social desirability are their "personableness",

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popularity and possession of monetary and material resources, in comparison to their peers (Berscheid, et al., 1971).

1.3.3 Forgiveness for a transgression

Also important in human social interaction is the forgiveness of an individual over a transgression they have committed. Forgiveness is an adaptive response in many situations as it has evolved as a mechanism to assist humans in maintaining relationships they consider to be important (Phillips & Hranek, 2012). In terms of interactions between strangers, if forgiveness serves as a mechanism to preserve relationships, then it would make sense for a person to forgive a stranger with the anticipation of a potential relationship with him or her (Phillips & Hranek, 2012). The forgiveness of the transgressing stranger would be motivated by the option of pursuing a relationship with them by serving to pave the way for future interactions. One's mate value is a variable by which holds considerable influence in whether an observer desires to pursue a relationship with an individual, and subsequently, chooses to forgive them (Phillips & Hranek, 2012). As one might expect, research by Phillips & Hranek (2012) indicated that, for both female and male participants, forgiveness of an offender of the opposite sex was significantly predicted by the attractiveness of that offender. Compared to unattractive people, attractive people receive more generous treatment after committing a social transgression (Adams, 1997).

1.4 Defining Objectification

While it appears as though being physically attractive is entirely a positive experience, research shows that those who are attractive encounter adversities, one of which being objectification. A complex concept, initially introduced by philosopher

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Immanuel Kant, objectification essentially refers to the process of reducing the status of a person from human to an object (Batool & Zaidi, 2017; Loughnan et al., 2010; Loughnan & Pacilli, 2014; Vaes, Loughnan & Puvia, 2013). Critical to understanding objectification, is the resulting process of dehumanization (Vaes et al., 2013). This involves the denial of an individual's personhood and humanity or human essence, and the regarding of the person as a means of satisfying one's own desires (Awasthi, 2017; Loughnan et al., 2010; Loughnan & Pacilli, 2014; Riemer et al., 2017).

Loughnan et al., (2010) highlight the idea of personhood as being the fundamental aspect to being a human, that is, the possession of a mind, and as being deserving of moral consideration. The possession of a mind is also referred to as moral agency, and concerns the capacity to act morally, while moral patiency refers to the deservingness of moral treatment (Loughnan et al., 2010). A dehumanized individual is thought of and subsequently treated as though they lack both the mental states and moral status associated with personhood (Loughnan et al., 2010). Loughnan & Pacilli (2014) identify the ensuing manifestations of objectification as denied autonomy, instrumentality, violability, fungibility, and denial of subjectivity.

An extension of objectification is sexual objectification, which involves both considering, and treating another person as a sexual object (Loughnan & Pacilli, 2014). In such case, a person's sexual body parts or functions are symbolically separated from the rest of the person (Loughnan & Pacilli, 2014). Sexual objectification can assume many forms (Keefer, Landau, Sullivan & Rothschild, 2014); it can be an attitude, manifested as a way of regarding another person as an object, and it can be expressed as a behavior, with the treatment of another person as an object (Loughnan & Pacilli, 2014). Theories on objectification are varied both between and among disciplines, with a number of theoretical perspectives available

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surrounding its motivational and situational antecedents (Keefer et al., 2014). Adding to his theory, Kant proposes that a person's sexual desires are a fundamental basis for their objectification of another person (Batool & Zaidi, 2017). Both males and females possess an innate interest in sexual satisfaction; this leads them to see one another as a compilation of sexual tools, or body parts, an attempt to satisfy such needs (Vaes et al., 2013).

As a result of reducing a person to an object, a tool to satisfy one's needs, an objectifier places great importance on the physical characteristics of their target. In fact, due to the importance they place on physical appearance, objectifiers reduce the value of their target to particular characteristics of their appearance (Keefer et al., 2014). Subsequently, they treat their target in accordance to how visually appealing they are. Adding to this, Frederickson and Roberts (1997) formally developed objectification theory as a basis for understanding how females experience objectification in a culture that sexually objectifies the female body. This theory solely focuses on females as the disproportionate victims of objectification due to internalization of strict cultural expectations, and highlights its negative consequences of body monitoring, shame and anxiety (Frederickson and Robertson, 1997).

In support of this theory, (Loughnan & Pacilli, 2014) suggests that important roles are played by sex, aggression and dislike in the creation of objectification. Conversely, Awasthi (2017) highlights the influence of the media and its sexualized representations of women, in eliciting objectification. In a variety of media, including but not limited to, advertisements, magazines, television, and music videos, women consistently occupy the role of the sexual object, compared to men (Vaes et al., 2013). Accompanying this role is an identity established entirely by their bodies, while their minds and personalities are completely disregarded (Batool & Zaidi, 2017). It could

be argued that these theories actually support each other, in that both situations exist in actuality, and work to endorse one another. Civile & Obhi (2016) suggest that in reality, a myriad of complex cognitive and social influences play a part in the resulting objectification.

1.5 Who is objectified?

Sexualization plays a large role in objectification. While not all people are sexualized, Loughnan & Pacilli (2014) indicate that both men and women are particularly more likely to be objectified when they are presented in a sexualized manner. Cristofaro (2017) demonstrates that even when women were considered equally attractive, they were treated differently by their male raters, dependent on the male's sexually motivated perceptions of the women. Research has shown that both men and women experience objectification (Loughnan & Pacilli, 2014; Rollero & Tartaglia, 2016). However, a well-established research base has shown that women are disproportionately sexually objectified, in comparison to their male counterparts (Loughnan & Pacilli, 2014; Rollero & Tartaglia, 2016; Strelan & Hargreaves, 2005). The sexualization of women in the media in Westernized societies could play a substantial role in this disparity (Strelan & Hargreaves, 2005). Interestingly, women also experienced objectification by other women, in addition to being objectified by men (Civile & Obhi (2016; Strelan & Hargreaves, 2005). A possible explanation for this is the fact that, in Western society, a woman is largely valued based on her physical appearance, which forms the basis of the resulting evaluation of her worth (Rollero & Tartaglia, 2016; Strelan & Hargreaves, 2005). This is not the case for males, as they are not typically valued based on their appearance (Rollero & Tartaglia, 2016). Further, a number of studies have proposed that, compared to a man,

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a woman's physical attractiveness is a more important aspect of her social desirability (Berscheid, et al., 1971). This was demonstrated by (Loughnan & Pacilli, 2014), who suggested that both men and women considered a woman's sexualized body parts most important, in comparison to her other non-sexualized body parts.

Adams (1977) highlights that sex appeal, and the sexualized body, is strongly related to physical attractiveness.

It has been suggested that, as attractiveness is considered an important aspect in both friendship and mate choice, those who are attractive are perceived as objects of desire (Cristofaro, 2017). In support of this, Cristofaro (2017) reported an association between facial attractiveness and objectification. Further, research has indicated that, compared to their less attractive peers, attractive people tend to be objectified more (Loughnan & Pacilli, 2014; Riemer et al., 2017). Moreover, attraction, and subsequently sexual desire, play significant roles in sexual objectification, as highlighted by (Loughnan & Pacilli, 2014), whether it be a male or female subject, men are more likely to objectify people that they have an attraction to.

1.6 The current study

This study asks the question, how do objectifiers respond to a transgression, depending on the attractiveness of the offender?

The study involves an experimental design within a hypothetical "tinder date" scenario. Participants will take part via an online questionnaire and will complete a modified version of Noll and Frederickson's (1998) Self-Objectification Questionnaire, to assess their level of objectification of others. They will be presented with an image of a fictional offender, "Sam", whose attractiveness has been experimentally manipulated. Finally, participants will be presented with a

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hypothetical transgression stimulus, and then asked to indicate their level of forgiveness, and resulting perceptions of Sam, via a questionnaire. A between-subject design is used to examine whether attractiveness and objectification interact on forgiveness and trait perception of an offender.

On the one hand, it is evident that objectification changes both the way a person views and treats other people (Loughnan & Pacilli, 2014). Due to the process of dehumanization, those who are objectified are attributed less mental status, and thus are perceived as lacking in competence (Awasthi, 2017; Civile & Obhi 2016; Heflick & Goldenberg, 2009; Loughnan & Pacilli, 2014; Riemer et al., 2017; Rollero & Tartaglia, 2016). As a result, objectified individuals are denied agency and self-determination (Heflick & Goldenberg, 2009). In which case, would an attractive person be less likely to be assigned fault for their transgression because they are objectified, and therefore be more likely to be forgiven? On the other hand, attractive individuals are likely to be dehumanized by objectifiers, and seen as objects to be evaluated by their physical appearance. In which case, does this cause the objectifier more disappointment from being transgressed by what they desire, resulting in them being less likely to forgive?

Also of interest are gender effects on the potential interaction between attractiveness and objectification on forgiveness and trait perception. Studies have consistently indicated that when making dating and mating choices, males place a greater importance on physical attractiveness than females do (Berscheid et al., 1971). And, while males and females are both objectified (Awasthi, 2017), women are objectified disproportionately more than men (Batoool & Zaidi, 2017; Loughnan & Pacilli, 2014; Strelan & Hargreaves, 2017). Thus, it would be plausible to argue that

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the effects for the attractiveness and objectification interaction would be significantly stronger for men (male participant, female subject) than for women.

The current study aims to explore this issue, and hopefully, add some insight to the current literature. The research will be exploratory in nature, testing whether there is an interaction between attractiveness and objectification on forgiveness and resulting trait perception of the offender. Further, the effects will be analyzed in terms of gender differences.

The research question, aim and hypotheses are as follows:

Question 1: How do objectifiers (high objectification score) respond to a transgression committed by an attractive person?

Aim: examine whether there is an attractiveness x objectification interaction with forgiveness and trait perception – in either a positive or negative direction

Hypotheses: participants' level of objectification will moderate the effect of attractiveness on forgiveness

Hypothesis 1a: High attractiveness + high objectification = high forgiveness

Hypothesis 1b: High attractiveness + high objectification = low forgiveness

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Question 2: Will there be gender effects on this interaction?

Aim: examine whether, if an interaction is present, there is an effect of gender, on this relationship

Hypotheses: if an interaction between attractiveness and objectification is present, the effects will be stronger for male participants, than for females

CHAPTER 2:

Method

2.1 Current study

2.1.1 Participants

Participants were recruited via convenience sampling methods. Participants were all registered users of the labour sourcing website, <http://prolific.ac>, and were paid £5.03 (currently AUD\$9.20) per hour for their time. This is a site based in the United Kingdom, and is well documented by psychological researchers. To partake in this study, participants were required to be between the ages of 18 and 40, identify as either male or female, heterosexual, and have had previously used a smartphone enabled dating apps.

A total of 251 participants were recruited to take part in the survey. Of the final sample 138 were male (55%) and 113 were female (45%), with ages ranging from 18 to 40 ($M = 29.64$, $SD = 4.18$). The majority of participants identified as White (88.8%), followed by Hispanic/Latino (3.6%), Mixed race (2.4%), Asian (2%), Black (2%) and Arab (0.4%). (59.4%) of participants were in a relationship (type of relationship not specified) and (40.6%) were single.

2.1.2 Procedure

The study was conducted online. It employed a 2 x 2 x 2 experimental design, in which attractiveness was manipulated. The study was titled *The Tinder Date* and was advertised as involving a hypothetical tinder date that would require participants to imagine themselves on, and answer following questions regarding their feelings about the given scenario. Participants gave informed consent at the commencement of

the study. This research involved limited disclosure of the research aims regarding the manipulation of attractiveness as well as the measurement of objectification.

2.1.3 Stimuli

2.1.3.1 Visual stimuli

Offender attractiveness was manipulated using colour vignettes of faces with neutral expressions. The photos consisted of two attractive faces (one female, one male) and two unattractive faces, thus providing four experimental conditions: (1) attractive female, (2) unattractive female, (3) attractive male, and (4) unattractive male. See figure 1 for an illustration of the vignettes. The images were sourced from a larger set of 200 images provided by the Oslo Face Database at the University of Oslo, Norway (Chelnokova et al., 2014). The images on the database had been pre-rated for attractiveness by students from the University of Oslo ($N = 40$, 21 females and 19 males) ($M = 26.0$, $SD = 7.5$). For each image, the database provided three mean scores: the mean for male raters, the mean for female raters, and an overall combined mean score. In this study, the combined raters mean score was used.

As a method of assurance, the five highest and five lowest rated faces for both genders were piloted to friends and colleagues ($N = 27$), (males = 14, females = 113), aged between 18 and 62 ($M = 27.15$, $SD = 12.41$). Two documents were provided to participants, one containing vignettes of the five most attractive faces of the opposite gender, and one containing the five faces that were voted least attractive. Participants were asked “*From each page, which person are you most likely to go on a tinder date with?*” Those with the most votes on from each page were utilized as visual stimuli in the study.

2.1.4 Survey

2.1.4.1 Section 1: Objectification of others

In section 1, participant's objectification of others was measured using a modified version of Noll and Frederickson's (1998) Self-Objectification Questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 10 items and requires individuals to indicate the degree to which they view their body in an objectified way. Five items are appearance based, objectified terms, (i.e. weight, sex appeal, physical attractiveness, firm/sculpted muscles, measurements) and five items are competence based, non-objectified terms, (i.e. strength, physical co-ordination, energy level, health, physical fitness). In this case, participants rated the importance of the attributes of others. Participants read the following instructions: "First we need to collect some information about your attitudes and beliefs. So in this section, we are interested to know about your attitudes regarding other people's bodies. Below, we have identified 10 different body attributes. We would like you to rank order these body attributes in descending order on the basis of what is most important to you in a person (rank this a "10"), to what is least important to you in a person (rank this a "0"). Each ranking (number) can only be used once". Final scores are the result of the difference between the sum of the competence ratings and the sum of the appearance ratings. Possible scores range from -25 to 25, with higher scores demonstrating higher levels of objectification.

2.1.4.2 Section 2: Before the date

Participants were asked to imagine that they have been using the dating app Tinder, and have matched with 'Sam', who they have not met before. They are told that they have been talking with and getting to know Sam for a week and have

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arranged to go on a date. Participants are asked to indicate their preference for a male or female date, and were then randomly assigned to either attractive or unattractive experimental conditions. This resulted in four experimental conditions: (1) attractive female date, (2) unattractive female date, (3) attractive male date or (4) unattractive male date.

2.1.4.3 Section 3: The image (visual stimuli)

Participants were provided an image of Sam (male or female depending on their preference) (See Figure 1), paired with the instructions “This is your date, Sam. Please take a moment to consider the type of person that Sam appears to be.” The provided photo was depended upon the experimental condition to which the participant has been assigned (i.e. attractive or unattractive).

Figure 1. Photos presented to participants for attractiveness manipulation



Note: attractive conditions are on the left.

2.1.4.4 Section 4: Sam’s traits

Participants were presented a list of characteristics and asked to indicate on a likert scale (*1= strongly disagree; 5= strongly agree*) the extent to which these applied to Sam. The characteristics appeared in random order but existed as part of a larger group of traits, with warmth and competence being the main groups of interest,

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as these traits are essential to the perception of another person as human (Cristofaro, 2017). Warmth (Cronbach's $\alpha = .87$) was assessed by the items: “trustworthy”, “nice”, “confident”, “kind”, “fun”, “friendly”, “sincere”, “warm” and “empathetic”.

Competence (Cronbach's $\alpha = .81$) was assessed by the items: “reliable”, “competent”, “skilled”, “morally sound” and “smart”. The negative traits variable was measured by items: “domineering” and “selfish”, and was used to assess internal consistency, and appearance items “good looking” and “attractive” were utilized as a manipulation check.

2.1.4.5 Section 5: Comparison to Sam

Participant perception of comparison between themselves and Sam was measured by responses to two statements, one regarding appearance and one regarding personality, on a 5-point Likert Scale (*1 = much worse; 5 = much better*). They were then asked to indicate how likely they are to want to go on a date with Sam, on a 5-point Likert scale (*1 = extremely unlikely; 5 = extremely likely*). (Montoya, 2008) suggests that a person's perception of their own value serves as a standard to which others are compared, and thus influences their evaluations of the attractiveness of others. This comparison check was utilized to determine how the participant believes they compare to Sam.

2.1.4.6 Section 6: Expectations of the date

Participant sexual expectations of the date were measured by responses to two questions on a 5-point Likert scale. They were asked, “How are you that the date with Sam will end in sex?” (*1 = not at all hopeful; 5 = extremely hopeful*) and “To what

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extent to you expect the date with Sam to end in sex?" (*1= not at all; 5= very high extent*).

2.1.4.7 Section 7: The date scenario

Participants were instructed to imagine that it is the night of their date with Sam, and were presented with the following stimulus "You are positive about the idea of meeting your tinder match. You invest time and thought into preparing for this date; thinking about what you are going to wear, the right location, and arriving a few minutes early so Sam would not have to be the one to wait. Sam arrives on time and you immediately get along. You spend hours conversing and establishing commonalities. You enjoy this date and feel as though you and Sam have chemistry, hopeful that you will continue getting to know each other. As the night comes to an end, you express your satisfaction with the date and ask Sam whether he/she is interested in continuing to get to know each other. However, Sam does not feel the same way. Sam politely rejects you advances and expresses that he/she is not interested in pursuing anything further." Participants were instructed to take time to imagine what this rejection might feel like.

2.1.4.8 Section 8: Rationality

To examine how Sam's actions were rationalized, participants were asked to indicate what they thought of Sam and his/her subsequent actions on a 5-point likert scale (*1= strongly disagree; 5= strongly agree*). The following positive-rationalization items were presented: "Sam would feel remorseful" and "there would be a good reason why Sam has rejected me", in addition to the negative-

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rationalization items (recoded): “Sam intended to hurt me” and “Sam has probably done this before”.

2.1.4.9 Section 9: Forgiveness

2.1.4.9.1 Forgiveness as positive responding

Forgiveness as positive responding was measured using seven items (examples: “If I was to see Sam, I will act in a friendly manner”, and “I would give Sam another chance”). The measure indicated good internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .79$)

2.1.4.9.2 Forgiveness as negative responding

Forgiveness as negative responding was measured using 17 items (example: “I will not try to help Sam if he/she needs me”, and “I am bitter about what happened with Sam”). The measure indicated high internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$)

2.1.4.10 Section 10: Sam's traits

Participants' perception of Sam's traits (warmth, competence, negative traits and appearance) after the transgression was measured using the same items as section 4. This was measured to examine the difference between perceptions of Sam before and after the transgression. The difference score for trait assignment was measured to indicate the change in trait perception from before and after the transgression. These scores were calculated by subtracting the post-transgression trait score from the pre-transgression trait score.

2.1.4.11 Section 11: Demographic information

Lastly, participants were asked to provide their age, gender, relationship status and the race/ethnicity that best describes them.

CHAPTER 3:

Results

3.1 Manipulation check

3.1.1 Attractiveness

To ensure the desired manipulation occurred between the attractive and unattractive conditions, Independent sample *t*-tests were conducted. The item ratings for the *appearance*-based traits taken prior to the transgression, “good looking” and “attractive”, were tested to see whether they varied across conditions. This was done for both male and female participants. Table 1 reports the descriptive statistics, and tables 2 and 3 report the inferential statistics for male and female participants respectively, indicating that the manipulation was successful; participants in the attractive condition rated Sam as significantly more attractive than those in the unattractive condition, for both males and females.

3.2 Background variables

3.2.1 Scenario validity

The item “compared to Sam, my looks are...” and the questions “how likely are you to want to go on a date with Sam?” and “how hopeful are you that the date with Sam will end in sex?” were also tested via independent sample *t*-tests, to see whether they varied across conditions. This was done for both male and female participants. Table 1 reports the descriptive statistics, and tables 2 and 3 report the inferential statistics for male and female participants respectively, establishing that the scenario was valid. Both males and female in the attractive condition rated themselves higher in comparison to Sam when in the unattractive condition, and lower when in

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Table 1. Summary of descriptive statistics for male and female participants and unattractive and attractive conditions on manipulation check, background variables, forgiveness and trait assignment

| | Male participants | | Female participants | |
|---------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| | Attractiveness condition | | Attractiveness condition | |
| | Unattractive <i>N</i> = 69 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>) | Attractive <i>N</i> = 69 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>) | Unattractive <i>N</i> = 61 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>) | Attractive <i>N</i> = 52 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>) |
| Manip. check – appearance | 2.67 (1.02) | 3.96 (0.82) | 2.02 (0.86) | 4.25 (0.66) |
| Perceived transgression | 2.16 (0.86) | 2.13 (0.78) | 2.45 (0.81) | 2.49 (0.92) |
| Comparison | 3.40 (0.68) | 2.99 (0.60) | 3.61 (0.66) | 3.00 (0.60) |
| Want for date | 2.61 (1.09) | 3.54 (0.98) | 2.02 (0.99) | 3.56 (0.98) |
| Hope for sex | 2.10 (1.16) | 2.77 (1.31) | 1.20 (0.54) | 1.67 (1.02) |
| Expectation of sex | 1.97 (1.12) | 2.14 (1.14) | 1.30 (0.56) | 1.98 (1.18) |
| Rationale | 3.07 (0.74) | 3.15 (0.75) | 3.25 (0.78) | 2.95 (0.88) |
| Forgiveness | 3.37 (0.62) | 3.34 (0.53) | 3.00 (0.57) | 3.08 (0.67) |
| Warmth difference | -0.04 (0.65) | 0.15 (0.81) | -0.14 (0.54) | 0.20 (0.63) |
| Competence difference | 0.11 (0.61) | 0.17 (0.67) | 0.05 (0.63) | 0.27 (0.58) |
| Appearance difference | 0.00 (0.64) | 0.16 (0.63) | 0.14 (0.47) | 0.33 (0.47) |
| Negative trait difference | -0.17 (0.91) | -0.19 (0.84) | 0.02 (0.79) | -0.07 (0.74) |

the attractive condition. Participants were more likely to want to go on a date with the attractive Sam, compared to the unattractive Sam. Those in the attractive condition were more hopeful for the date to end in sex, compared to those in the unattractive condition.

3.2.2 Occurrence of a transgression

As a hypothetical scenario was provided, it was necessary to check whether it was perceived as a transgression, which in turn warranted forgiveness. Participants' ratings of agreement were assessed to determine that the scenario was interpreted as a transgression, and thus provoked feelings of hurt. To test for this, a new variable named "perceived transgression" (Cronbach's $\alpha = .87$) was created and consisted of

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Table 2. Summary of inferential statistics for male participants for main and interaction effects of attractiveness and objectification on manipulation checks, background variables, forgiveness and trait assignment ($N = 138$)¹

| | Attractiveness | | | Objectification | | | Interaction | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------|----------|-------------------|-----------------|----------|-----------------|-------------|----------|----------------|
| | <i>B</i> | <i>p</i> | CI 95% | <i>B</i> | <i>p</i> | CI 95% | <i>B</i> | <i>p</i> | CI 95% |
| Manip. check – appearance | 0.65 | .00 | 0.49, 0.81 | -0.01 | .54 | -0.02, 0.01 | - | .99 | -0.02, 0.02 |
| Perceived transgression | -0.02 | .76 | -0.16, 0.12 | 0.01 | .29 | -0.01, 0.02 | 0.01 | .39 | -0.01, 0.02 |
| Comparison | -0.20 | .00 | -0.31, 0 -0.09 | 0.001 | .86 | -0.01, 0.01 | -0.003 | .64 | -0.01, 0.01 |
| Want for date | 0.44 | .00 | 0.29, 0 0.64 | 0.001 | .96 | -0.02, 0.02 | 0.0002 | .98 | -0.02, 0.02 |
| Hope for sex | 0.33 | .00 | 0.12, 2 0.54 | 0.004 | .71 | -0.02, 0.02 | 0.001 | .96 | -0.02, 0.02 |
| Expectation of sex | 0.11 | .28 | -0.09, 0.30 | -0.02 | .11 | -0.03, 0.004 | -0.01 | .38 | -0.03, 0.01 |
| Rationale | 0.05 | .47 | -0.08, 0.17 | -0.01 | .36 | -0.02, 0.01 | 0.003 | .62 | -0.01, 0.02 |
| Forgiveness | 0.005 | .92 | -0.10, 0.09 | 0.007 | .18 | -0.02, 0.003 | -0.002 | .62 | -0.01, 0.01 |
| Warmth difference | 0.09 | .16 | -0.03, 0.22 | 0.02 | .78 | -0.01, 0.01 | -0.002 | .71 | -0.01, 0.01 |
| Competence difference | 0.02 | .72 | -0.09, 0.13 | 0.01 | .24 | -0.004, 0.02 | -0.001 | .91 | -0.01, 0.01 |
| Appearance difference | 0.08 | .15 | -0.03, 0.19 | 0.001 | .87 | -0.01, 0.01 | 0.006 | .26 | -0.01, 0.02 |
| Negative traits difference | - | .95 | -0.15, 0.14 | -0.005 | .48 | -0.02, 0.01 | 0.001 | .92 | -0.01, 0.02 |

the following seven items: “Sam intended to hurt me”, “I am bitter about what Sam did to me”, “I am mad about what happened with Sam”, “I resent what Sam did to me”, “Sam should regret this transgression”, “I do not deserve this treatment” and “I have been treated unfairly”.

¹ Due to spatial restrictions, CI decimal points have been rounded.

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Table 3. Summary of inferential statistics for female participants for main and interaction effects of attractiveness and objectification on manipulation check, background variables, forgiveness and trait assignment ($N = 113$)²

| | Attractiveness | | | Objectification | | | Interaction | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------|----------|----------------|-----------------|----------|-----------------|-------------|----------|-----------------|
| | <i>B</i> | <i>p</i> | CI 95% | <i>B</i> | <i>p</i> | CI 95% | <i>B</i> | <i>p</i> | CI 95% |
| Manip. check – appearance | 1.12 | .00 | 0.97, 1.27 | 0.01 | .47 | -0.01, 0.02 | 0.004 | .61 | -0.01, 0.02 |
| Perceived transgression | 0.02 | .80 | -0.14, 0.18 | 0.00 | .99 | -0.02, 0.02 | -0.001 | .90 | -0.02, 0.02 |
| Comparison | -0.30 | .00 | -0.42, 0 | 0.001 | .84 | -0.01, 0.01 | 0.001 | .83 | -0.01, 0.01 |
| Want for date | 0.78 | .00 | 0.59, 0 | 0.01 | .24 | -0.01, 0.03 | 0.02 | .09 | -0.002, 0.03 |
| Hope for sex | 0.24 | .00 | 0.09, 0.39 | -0.001 | .86 | -0.02, 0.01 | -0.001 | .93 | -0.02, 0.01 |
| Expectation of sex | 0.34 | .00 | 0.17, 0.51 | -0.006 | .48 | -0.02, 0.01 | -0.004 | .62 | -0.02, 0.01 |
| Rationale | -0.15 | .06 | -0.30, 0.07 | 0.003 | .66 | 0.01, 0.02 | 0.01 | .43 | -0.01, 0.02 |
| Forgiveness | 0.03 | .56 | -0.08 | -0.004 | .49 | -0.02, 0.01 | -0.002 | .77 | -0.01, 0.01 |
| Warmth difference | 0.17 | .00 | 0.06, 0.28 | 0.002 | .72 | -0.01, 0.01 | -0.001 | .80 | -0.01, 0.01 |
| Competence difference | 0.12 | .05 | 0.002, 0.23 | 0.01 | .07 | -0.001, 0.02 | 0.002 | .77 | -0.01, 0.01 |
| Appearance difference | 0.10 | .03 | 0.01, 0.18 | 0.01 | .09 | -0.001, 0.02 | -0.01 | .09 | -0.02, 0.001 |
| Negative traits difference | -0.05 | .53 | -0.19, 0.10 | -0.001 | .95 | -0.02, 0.01 | 0.003 | .71 | -0.01, 0.02 |

A One-sample *t*-test showed that, on average, male participants' rating of the transgression was significantly lower than the likert scale midpoint of 3 ($M = 2.14$, $SD = 0.82$), $t(137) = 12.35$, $p < .001$. Female participants' rating of the transgression was also significantly lower than the likert scale midpoint of 3 ($M = 2.47$, $SD = 0.86$), $t(112) = 6.58$, $p < .001$. This indicates that both male and female participants did not perceive the hypothetical scenario as a transgression.

² Due to spatial restrictions, CI decimal points have been rounded.

3.3 Hypothesis testing

PROCESS (Hayes, 2018: Version 3.4, 5000 iteration; bias corrected, 95% confidence intervals; model 1) was employed to test hypotheses. Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations for the experimental condition for both men and women. Table 2 shows the inferential statistics for the main effects of the attractiveness condition, objectification and their interaction on the dependent variables for male participants. Table 3 displays the inferential statistics for the main effects of the attractiveness condition, objectification and their interaction on the dependent variables.

3.3.1 Hypothesis testing in male participants

3.3.1.1 Main effects for attractiveness

As seen in table 2, there were no significant effects for attractiveness on any of the dependent variables.

3.3.1.2 Main effects for objectification

As seen in table 2, there were no significant effects for objectification on any of the dependent variables.

3.3.1.3 Interaction between attractiveness and objectification

Table 2 shows that there was no interaction between attractiveness and objectification on any of the dependent variables for male participants.

3.3.2 Hypothesis testing in female participants

3.3.2.1 Main effects for attractiveness

As indicated in table 3, there was a significant effect of attractiveness condition on the difference in female participants' scores of warmth, competence and appearance. Participants showed a greater difference score in the ratings of Sam's warmth, competence and appearance, in the attractive condition, compared to the unattractive condition, indicating a transgression committed by an attractive offender results in a greater decrease in the assignment of positive traits.

It is noted that one variable, rationale ($p = .06$), approached statistical significance. Ratings of rationale, was higher for those in the attractive condition than those in the unattractive condition.

3.3.2.2 Main effects for objectification

As seen in table 3, there were no significant effects for objectification on any of the dependent variables. However, it should be noted that the effect of objectification on two of the dependent variables, competence difference ($p = .07$) and appearance difference ($p = .09$) approached statistical significance. This suggests that those scoring higher on objectification are more likely to have greater difference in ratings of competence and appearance.

3.3.2.3 Interaction between attractiveness and objectification

Table 3 shows that there was no interaction between attractiveness and objectification on any of the dependent variables for female participants. Though, it is noteworthy that two of the dependent variables, want for date ($p = .09$) and appearance difference ($p = .09$) approached significant. As reported in table 3, as

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objectification scores and Sam's attractiveness increased, participants had a greater desire to go on the date. Additionally, as objectification scores and Sam's attractiveness increased, there was a decrease in the difference of appearance scores.

CHAPTER 4:

Discussion

4.1 Summary of results

This research presented the aim of investigating the effects of objectification on the documented relationship between attractiveness and forgiveness. Specifically, it examined whether objectification would have a moderating interaction with the relationship once a transgression had occurred. I aimed to answer the question, how do objectifiers (high objectification score) respond to a transgression committed by an attractive person? The research was exploratory in nature to test two competing, yet plausible hypotheses, with the results possessing the possibility to go either way. The findings from the current study and their implications for the hypotheses will be discussed below.

Using an exploratory analysis, I tested two competing hypotheses. It was hypothesized that participants' level of objectification will moderate the effects of attractiveness on forgiveness, with the possibility of the effect going in either direction:

Hypothesis 1a: High attractiveness paired with high objectification resulting in high forgiveness

Hypothesis 1b: High attractiveness paired with high objectification resulting in low forgiveness

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The main aim of this research was to explore how objectifiers (those scoring high on Noll & Frederickson's (1998) objectification measure) respond to a transgression committed by an attractive offender. Two plausible hypotheses (1a and 1b) were proposed, aiming to account for either of two contrasting outcomes. On the one hand, objectifiers could have been more forgiving to an attractive transgressor due to assigning them less competence and autonomy and as a result, less fault (hypothesis 1a). On the other hand, objectifiers could have been less forgiving to an attractive offender, due to appearance being the very quality they value (hypothesis 1b).

Contrary to expectations, there were no significant effects for an interaction between attractiveness and objectification on forgiveness, and therefore neither of the two hypotheses was supported. This was the case for both male and female participants.

4.1.1 Effects of attractiveness

4.1.1.1 Comparison

The attractiveness condition had significant effects on a participants' comparison between themselves and Sam, with those in the unattractive condition indicating they had a better appearance and personality. This was the case for both male and female participants.

4.1.1.2 Want for date

Shown by both male and female participants, those in the attractive condition were significantly more likely to want to go on a date with Sam, than those in the unattractive condition. This finding is consistent with those that precede it, where it

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has been claimed that attractive people are overwhelmingly desired, and preferred to less attractive individuals, by prospective mates (Adams, 1997; Berscheid, et al., 1971; Phillips & Hranek, 2012; Reis et al., 1982; Rowatt et al., 1999; Walster et al., 1966). Also consistent with findings by Rowatt et al. (1999), this preference for an attractive date is holds true for both males and females.

4.1.1.3 Hope for sex

Both male and female participants had a greater desire for the date with Sam to end with a sexual encounter, when Sam was attractive compared to when Sam was unattractive. This is consistent with the findings from many areas of research. Adams (1997) highlights the association between physical attractiveness and sex appeal, in that those who are more attractive have more sex appeal and thus are more desired for a sexual encounter, than their less attractive peers. While overall appearance largely contributes to ones' sex appeal, Chelnokova et al. (2014) notes that the face alone is a powerful enough cue to motivate sexual behavior. Another potential explanation for this effect is the subjects' perceived mate value, with research consistently showing that attractive people are rated higher in mate value Phillips & Hranek, 2012). Desire to mate with an individual thus increases their hope to engage in sex with them.

4.1.1.4 Expectation of sex

Findings suggest that the expectation of the date ending in sex significantly differ depending on the attractiveness of Sam, with those in the attractive condition having a greater expectation of sex than those in the unattractive condition. This effect was only observed in female participants, with the expectation likely motivated by the participants' actual desire for Sam, on the basis of his attractiveness. On the

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other hand, male participants were just as likely to expect sex from Sam, regardless of her attractiveness. Perhaps this is explained by (Fromme & Emihovich, 1998) who highlights the permissive nature of attitudes towards casual sex of males in comparison to females.

4.1.1.5 Forgiveness

Contrary to expectations, the findings from this research showed no significant effect of the attractiveness condition on participant ratings of forgiveness, for both males and females. These results are inconsistent with the findings of Phillips & Hranek (2012), which offer strong evidence suggesting that the attractiveness of an offender is a significant predictor of forgiveness. An explanation for the contradictory findings from this research may be a result of the fundamental conceptual limitations associated with the perception of a transgression. This will be discussed under conceptual limitations below.

4.1.1.6 Trait difference

For female participants, the attractiveness condition had a significant effect on trait difference scores for warmth, competence and appearance. Compared to those in the unattractive condition, participants who were in the attractive condition showed a greater difference between pre- and post-transgression offender trait ratings. This potentially suggests that a transgression committed by an attractive offender is more hurtful than one committed by an unattractive offender, resulting in a greater decrease in the assignment of positive traits.

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This effect was not observed in male participants, as there was no significant difference between attractive and unattractive conditions. This suggests that males are not influenced by an offenders' attractiveness when assigning them traits after a transgression. These results were neither expected nor unexpected as this is the first research to examine this interaction.

4.1.2 Effects of objectification

Contrary to expectations, there were no significant effects of objectification on any of the dependent variables. This finding appears to be incompatible with much of the objectification literature. Objectification is the process of reducing others to the status of an object, by denying them mental states and moral status (Loughnan et al., 2010). This process largely involves the reduction of a person to the characteristics of their physical appearance and, as a result, evaluating and then treating them accordingly (Keefer et al., 2014; Loughnan & Pacilli, 2014). Thus, it can be argued that appearance is inherently a part of objectification. In which case, the lack of effect of objectification on the appearance manipulation check, self and offender comparison and want for a date variables, becomes perplexing.

Moreover, another key feature of objectification is the emphasis of one's instrumentality (Loughnan et al., 2010), whereby the subject is considered as a means of satisfying the objectifiers' sexual pleasure and desires (Batool & Zaidi, 2017; Loughnan & Pacilli, 2014). This considered, in addition to the proposed link between attractiveness and objectification, presents reason to question the lack of effect of objectification on the variables measuring participants' hope and expectation of sex.

Findings also failed to demonstrate an effect of objectification on variables measured after the occurrence of the transgression; forgiveness, warmth difference,

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competence difference, appearance difference, and negative trait difference. As this is the first study to measure an effect on these types of variables, a comparison to literature becomes problematic. For this reason, the research was exploratory in nature, and expectations were only speculative. Nevertheless, a potential explanation for the lack off effect may lie within the conceptual limitations of this study. This will be discussed under methodological limitations below.

4.2 General discussion

Strengths and limitations of the current study will be discussed below, succeeded by the implications of the findings and suggestions for future research in the area.

4.2.1 Strengths

In this section, the strengths of the study, specifically the convenience sample utilized, will be discussed.

4.2.1.1 Sampling strengths

The labour-sourcing website Prolific was employed to recruit a convenience sample of participants, with 251 participants included in the final sample. The sample included a large portion of both male ($N = 138$) and female ($N = 113$) participants, with males accounting for a slight majority (55%) of the sample. Ages from the sample ranged from 18 – 40 years of age, and participants identified as members of all major ethnic groups, with Caucasians (88.8%) constituting the majority. This sample is reasonably representative of the general population. Further, to control for potential confounding variables, the study was limited to those who were

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heterosexual, and identified as cis-gender. While the employment of only heterosexual and cis-gender participants slightly limits generalizability to the wider population, heterosexual interactions have been the focus of all current literature with observable effects, so this control seemed necessary in order to replicate findings.

Additionally, participants were restricted to those who had previous experience using a smartphone dating app. The hypothetical scenario involved in this study required participants to imagine they had been using the dating app Tinder, and had subsequently matched with Sam, who they have not met before. Participants are instructed to imagine that they have arranged to go on a date with Sam after getting to know each other for a week. This type of scenario is commonplace in the online dating scene. Screening for previous experience with smartphone dating apps ensured that not only were participants aware of how dating apps function, but were able to resonate with the scenario. This too, applies to the occurrence of rejection a during a tinder date. It is reasonable to assume that those who have had experience with smartphone dating apps are likely to have encountered a similar incidence of rejection to the one described in the study. Thus, while this was a hypothetical scenario, it is plausible that participants were able to relate the scenario to a previous dating app experience, resulting in a more accurate prediction of their subsequent behavior.

4.2.2 Limitations

Both the methodological and conceptual limitations of this study will be discussed below.

4.2.2.1 Methodological limitations

4.2.2.1.1 Artificiality of hypothetical scenario

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The main methodological limitation of this research is the lack of ecological validity due to the research design. Hypothetical scenarios, while convenient, can be problematic when trying to generalize results to the population. Previous research has indicated that there is a discrepancy between how participants predict they would respond to a hypothetical scenario and their actual behavior in said scenario (Phillips & Hranek, 2012). That is, indicated responses in a survey may not correspond to that participant's actual behavior when presented with a similar situation in real life. Phillips & Hranek (2012) suggest that this is especially problematic in the assessments of constructs such as forgiveness, which rely on values. As previously mentioned, there was an attempt to control for this discrepancy by only including participants who had previous experience with dating apps.

Further, Tinder involves swiping through images of individuals, and by 'swiping yes' to them, attempting to pursue an interaction with them. As the app relies on images of potential partners, Tinder 'matches' are purely made on the basis of an attraction. As mentioned, the manipulation was successful, indicating that the participants allocated to the unattractive condition, found Sam unattractive and were not likely to want to go on a date with them. Consequently, those allocated to the unattractive condition were subjected to an unrealistic scenario.

Finally, the character assessment of Sam in the current study relies on the assumption that the participant possesses minimal to no information about their date. The hypothetical scenario required participants to imagine that they had conversed with Sam for a week before the arrangement of a date. In reality, a week of conversation would offer a person considerable amount of time to evaluate the characteristics of their date. By agreeing to go on a date with Sam, it would be

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reasonable to assume that Sam's characteristics had been evaluated as positive. This too adds to the artificiality of the scenario.

4.2.2.2 Conceptual limitations

4.2.2.2.1 Perception of a transgression

Arguably the most influential limitation of this study, and a potential explanation for why no significant effects were found, was participant perception of the transgression. As mentioned in the results section, participants' ratings of agreement were assessed to determine whether the scenario was interpreted as a transgression, and in turn, warranted forgiveness. Findings indicated that both male and female participants did not perceive the hypothetical scenario as a transgression. This is problematic for a myriad of reasons.

The aim of this research was to examine whether objectification had a moderating effect on the relationship between attractiveness and forgiveness, and perceptions of the offender's characteristics. By definition, forgiveness involves the end of negative and resentful feelings towards another individual for committing a transgression. Thus, forgiveness fundamentally depends on the occurrence of a transgression. As participants didn't perceive the scenario as a transgression, nor as an overly hurtful experience, then it was unreasonable for them to indicate forgiveness. Thus, it is impossible to measure forgiveness as a dependent variable. This would serve to explain why there was no effect of attractiveness condition on forgiveness, despite consistent findings in literature. Further, this makes examining an effect of objectification on the relationship between attractiveness and forgiveness insurmountable.

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Evidently, this scenario does not constitute a transgression, and as a result, forgiveness was not relevant. Moreover, forgiveness is proposed to primarily serve as a mechanism of relationship maintenance. Phillips & Hranek (2012) add, in the event of the transgressor being a stranger, the victim is motivated to forgive, with the desire or anticipation of pursuing further interactions with them. In the case of this rejection scenario, the victim has been refused, and the potential for further interactions has been eliminated. This makes forgiveness implausible, considering the motivation behind forgiving a stranger.

A potential explanation for participants not perceiving the scenario as a transgression, and the resulting null effects, could be their previous experience with dating apps. Due to their previous experience on the apps, perhaps participants have become familiarised to the experience of rejection. It is plausible that throughout their dating experiences on Tinder, and other similar dating apps, participants have experienced a similar case of rejection and therefore have become accustomed to the potential of the date not ending in their favour. If this were the case, to protect their feelings and self-esteem, participants would have established a response to such situations, where they are no longer hurt by this type of rejection. This too, could serve as a conceivable explanation for why the scenario was not perceived as hurtful.

4.3 Future research

Despite this major limitation, it is reasonable to assume that the incident could be upsetting, to some degree. Aside from several items in the forgiveness measure assessing emotional response, this research focused almost exclusively on the participants' perception of the transgressor. As a result, participants' affective response, consisting of their emotions and mood, was overlooked. Additionally,

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participants' sense of self and self-esteem as a result of the rejection was disregarded. This could serve as an avenue for future researchers interested in the psychological effects of rejection on an individual. Such research could examine how people actually feel after a transgression has occurred, as opposed to how they perceive their transgressor. For example, this could include measures of emotional responses, resulting mood, perception of oneself, and overall self-esteem. It is imperative to this proposed research that the transgression would have to actually be perceived as hurtful by participants.

To account for the lack of construct validity in the current study, researchers could construct a new measure of transgression, involving a scenario where a committed offence is actually perceived. This would offer future participants a valid warrant for forgiveness. Examination of the literature on forgiveness could assist in determining what people actually perceive as a transgression committed against them. However, it is preferable for researchers to employ methods that do not rely on hypothetical transgressions. For example, this could involve a laboratory setting where transgressions are committed in person. Though, this type of setting comes with its own limitations. Alternatively, this could be achieved by examining of the reactions of participants to their own past experiences of transgressions.

4.4 Implications

This research may fail to offer an addition to existing theories of attractiveness, forgiveness and objectification, nor build any material for new ones. Nevertheless, due to the shortcomings present in this study, ideas for new research avenues have been proposed. As discussed, the transgression employed in the scenario was not seen as serious enough to cause hurt in the participants, and

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therefore warrant forgiveness. However, it is possible that this was not perceived as a transgression due to the strength of the study; the sample being those with previous tinder experience, as opposed to the first-year psychology students, used in other studies. While the sample was considered a strength in this study, new research avenues have now proposed for future researchers. By assessing the limitations in this study, researchers have the ability to amend its shortcomings.

Finally, while the null effects suggest that my hypotheses were not supported, this actually has a positive implication in real life. Understandably, objectification is consistently viewed as a negative aspect of society, due to its heightened focus on appearance and as a result, its potentially adverse consequences for the objectified. As discussed, objectification also impacts many aspects of our lives. However, this research provides evidence to suggest that objectification does not necessarily result in a negative response after rejection. Thus, objectification may not impact all areas of our lives. So, while this research didn't provide the expected results, it still offers us important insight into the occurrence of objectification.

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Appendix A – Questionnaire

The Tinder Date

Hi there,

We are interested in people's experiences with tinder dates. In this study you are going to respond to a hypothetical scenario about meeting someone on a tinder date. This task takes most people around 8 minutes to complete. It is important that you set aside sufficient time in a QUIET environment with NO DISTRACTIONS, so you can complete the tasks in one go.

Don't agonize over your answers! There are no right or wrong answers; just answer honestly.

The data you are providing will be used in a thesis for Psychology (Honours). Rest assured that your responses are completely anonymous.

Please note: by continuing, you are giving your consent to participate in this study.

* Before we begin, are you over the age of 18?

- Yes
 No

The Tinder Date

* Please enter your *Prolific* participant ID number

The Tinder Date

First we need to collect some information about your attitudes and beliefs.

So in this section, we are interested to know about your attitudes regarding other people's bodies.

Below, we have identified 10 different body attributes. We would like you to rank order these body attributes in descending order on the basis of what is most important to you in a person (rank this a 10), to what is least important to you in a person (rank this a 1).

Each ranking (number) can only be used once, therefore you should think carefully when answering each of these items.

* When considering the importance of a person's attributes what rank do you assign to...

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| ...physical coordination? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| ...health? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| ...weight? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| ...strength? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| ...sex appeal? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| ...physical attractiveness? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| ...energy level (e.g. stamina)? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| ...firm/sculpted muscles? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| ...physical fitness level? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| ...measurements (e.g., chest, waist, hips)? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

The Tinder Date

Now we would like you to imagine that you have been using Tinder and have matched with 'Sam', who you have not met before.

You and Sam have been talking and getting to know each other for a week.

You and Sam have arranged to go on a date. You will be able to view a photograph of Sam.

* First, please indicate whether you would like to go on this date with a male or a female.

- Male
- Female

The Tinder Date

A 50.0% This is your date, Sam. Please take a moment to consider the type of person that Sam appears to be.



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B 50.0% This is your date, Sam. Please take a moment to consider the type of person that Sam appears to be.



The Tinder Date

A 50.0% This is your date, Sam. Please take a moment to consider the type of person that Sam appears to be.



ATTRACTIVENES, OBJECTIFICATION AND FORGIVENESS

B 50.0% This is your date, Sam. Please take a moment to consider the type of person that Sam appears to be.



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The Tinder Date

* Based on the photograph of Sam, I think Sam is...

| | Strongly Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Trustworthy | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Domineering | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Nice | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Good looking | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Confident | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Kind | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Fun | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Selfish | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Attractive | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Reliable | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Friendly | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Sincere | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Competent | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Warm | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Skilled | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Empathetic | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Morally sound | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Smart | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

The Tinder Date

* How do you think **you compare** to Sam?

| | Much worse | Worse | On par | Better | Much better |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Compared to Sam, my looks are... | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Compared to Sam, my personality is... | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

The Tinder Date

* How likely are you to **want** to go on a date with Sam?

- Extremely Unlikely
- Unlikely
- Neither Likely nor Unlikely
- Likely
- Extremely Likely

The Tinder Date

* How **hopeful** are you that the date with Sam will end in sex?

Not at all Hopeful Somewhat Hopeful Moderately Hopeful Very Hopeful Extremely Hopeful

* To what extent do you **expect** the date with Sam to end in sex?

Not at all Low Extent Moderate Extent High Extent Very High Extent

The Tinder Date

Now we want you to Imagine that it is the night of your date with Sam...

You are positive about the idea of meeting your tinder match. You invest time and thought into preparing for this date; thinking about what you are going to wear, the right location, and arriving a few minutes early so Sam would not have to be the one to wait. Sam arrives on time and you immediately get along. You spend hours conversing and establish commonalities. You enjoy this date and feel as though you and Sam have chemistry, hopeful that you will continue getting to know each other. As the night comes to an end, you express your satisfaction with the date and ask Sam whether he/she is interested in continuing to get to know each other. However, Sam does not feel the same way. Sam politely rejects your advances and expresses that he/she is not interested in pursuing anything further.

Take some time to imagine what this rejection might feel like.

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The Tinder Date

When answering these questions, really imagine yourself in this situation. Picture the situation and Sam as vividly as possible...

* Right now, what do you think of Sam and his/her rejection?

| | Strongly Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Sam would feel remorseful | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Sam intended to hurt me | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| There would be a good reason why Sam has rejected me | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Sam has probably done this to others before | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

ATTRACTIVENES, OBJECTIFICATION AND FORGIVENESS

The Tinder Date

When answering these questions, really imagine yourself in this situation. Picture this situation and Sam as vividly as possible.

* Please indicate your subsequent feelings about Sam...

| | Strongly Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| I will not try to help Sam if he/she needs something | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| If I was to see Sam, I will act in a friendly manner | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I will continue to talk to Sam on tinder in the same way I did before our interaction | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| If there is an opportunity to get back at Sam, I will take it | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I will not talk to Sam if I bump into him/her on the street | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I feel upset when I think about Sam | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I am bitter about what Sam did to me | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I am mad about what happened with Sam | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I am still interested in Sam | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I resent what Sam did to me | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I would give Sam another chance | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I would speak negatively about Sam to my friends | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

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The Tinder Date

* Please indicate your subsequent feelings about Sam...

| | Strongly Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| I can find a better date than Sam | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Sam does not deserve my time | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I am going to unmatched Sam on Tinder | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Sam has no moral compass | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Sam should regret this transgression | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I deserve better than Sam | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I do not deserve this treatment | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I have been treated unfairly | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Sam had no right to do this to me | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| If i saw Sam in public, I would talk to him/her | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I think highly of Sam | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I have positive things to say about Sam | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

ATTRACTIVENES, OBJECTIFICATION AND FORGIVENESS

The Tinder Date

* I think Sam is...

| | Strongly Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Trustworthy | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Domineering | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Nice | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Good looking | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Confident | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Kind | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Fun | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Selfish | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Attractive | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Reliable | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Friendly | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Sincere | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Competent | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Warm | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Skilled | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Empathetic | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Morally sound | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Smart | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

The Tinder Date

Finally, please answer some demographic questions.

* How old are you?

* What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Don't identify as either

* Which of the following best describes your current relationship status?

- Single
- In a relationship

* Which race/ethnicity best describes you?

The Tinder Date

Thank you for completing this survey!

If you have experienced distress at any point throughout this survey please contact a health professional.

Below is the *Prolific* link to submit your responses:

[REDACTED]

Here is the completion code:

[REDACTED]