

# Abstract

Online platforms have been shown to be potentially fertile ground for exhibiting hypermasculine and hyperfeminine attitudes and behaviors<sup>9, 10</sup>. Yet, much of the research produced on these exaggerated gender roles online relates to general social networking, rather than online dating. The current study investigated the endorsement of exaggerated gender roles among those who use online dating platforms and its relationship to their behaviors online. Specifically, we hypothesized that those who adhere to exaggerated gender norms (i.e., hypermasculine and hyperfeminine) would emphasize their physical appearance on their online dating profiles over their personality, values, or other preferences. The research also explores the association of unilateral initial attraction on ‘matching’ preferences of other users’ online dating profiles. The sample consisted of 208 individuals who currently use online dating platforms. Participants either shared a screenshot of their online dating profile or answered a series of questions regarding their profile. Analyses demonstrate partial support for our hypotheses. Linear regression analyses suggested stronger endorsement of masculinity was related to a higher importance ranking of physical attractiveness and a lower importance of values and other attributes when viewing an online dating profile and preparing one’s own dating profile. Stronger endorsement of femininity was not significantly related to importance of either physical attractiveness or non-physical traits on one’s own online dating profile or another person’s online dating profile. Gender moderation analyses were not significant, suggesting that gender does not moderate the association between masculinity or femininity and profile preferences. Marginal findings indicated that hypermasculine males were more likely to match with an attractive photo over bio, whereas hyperfeminine females were more likely to match with an attractive bio over photo.

# Online Dating Behaviors and Gender Role Adherence

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### Online Dating History

- 1995: First online dating site, Match.com, was developed and released<sup>1</sup>
- 1996: 16 dating sites were listed online<sup>1</sup>
- 2002: Myspace was launched – beginning social networking<sup>1</sup>
- 2012: Of 54 million single people, 40 million tried online dating<sup>2</sup>
- 2020: Tinder reports its busiest year yet<sup>3</sup>
- 2020: Hinge’s revenue tripled from 2019 to 2020<sup>3</sup>

Note: Online dating predates social networking

### Background

#### Online Self-Presentation

- An advantage of online dating is that it provides users with a high control of impression management<sup>4</sup>
- To be successful in online dating, users must appear desirable to compare favorably with others<sup>4</sup>
- Unilateral Initial Attraction (UIA)<sup>5</sup> when profile viewing

#### Gender Differences in Online Dating

<b>Men</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emphasize financial and occupational success on profile<sup>6</sup></li> <li>More likely to be motivated by short-term romantic pleasure<sup>6</sup></li> <li>Less choosy about partner preferences<sup>6</sup></li> <li>Discriminate less in replies<sup>7</sup></li> </ul>	<b>Women</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emphasize appearance and sociability on profile<sup>6</sup></li> <li>More likely to be motivated by long-term relationships<sup>6</sup></li> <li>Discriminate more in preferences for age and ethnicity<sup>7</sup> and discriminate more in replies<sup>7</sup></li> <li>Initiate less<sup>8</sup></li> </ul>
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### Hypotheses

**H1: People who adhere to exaggerated gender norms will be more likely to emphasize physical appearance over their personality, values, or other preferences.**

**H2: Gender will moderate this relationship, such that men will show a stronger connection with masculinity and women will show a stronger connection with femininity.**

### Results

#### Variable Means

**NOTE: Lower scores indicate greater importance!**

### PROCESS for Gender Moderation

None of the analyses were significant, suggesting that gender does not moderate the association between masculinity or femininity and profile preferences.

### Matching Preferences

Logistic Regression & Crosstabs

**Males**

**Total**

**Females**

Hypermasculine males more likely to match with an attractive photo (52.9%) over bio (47.1%).

Hyperfeminine females more likely to match with an attractive bio (52.8%) over photo (47.2%).

### Linear Regression

<b>Importance of Physical Attractiveness</b> Masculinity was significantly related Self ( $B = -.20, SE = .23, p = .012$ ) Other ( $B = -.15, SE = .25, p = .076$ )  Femininity was not significantly related	<b>Importance of Non-Physical Traits</b> Masculinity was significantly related Self ( $B = .22, SE = .08, p = .005$ ) Other ( $B = .24, SE = .09, p = .003$ )  Femininity was not significantly related
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### Participants

- Requirements:
  - Active users of online dating
  - At least 18 years of age
  - English-speaking; reside within the U.S.
- Recruited through Prolific
- 208 total participants
  - 138 female, 60 male, 10 non-binary
- Age range 18-40+
  - ( $M = 27.08, SD = 6.75$ )

### Measures

- Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (CMNI)
  - Subscales: Winning, Power Over Women, & Heterosexual Self-Presentation
- Conformity to Feminine Norms Inventory (CFNI)
  - Subscales: Romantic Relationship, Sexual Fidelity, & Invest in Appearance
- Questions about online dating history and preferences
- Coded screenshots of participants’ online dating profile photos

### Procedures

- 10–15-minute Qualtrics survey

### Methods

Heterosexual 63%   
 LGBTQ 36.5%

Race/Ethnicity

### Outcome Variables

Participants were asked to rank from most to least importance of what is to be included on their own online dating profile, as well as what is to be included on other users’ online dating profile

One’s own physical attractiveness	Self_Attractive
One’s non-physical traits (i.e., interests, morals)	Self_Traits
Other users’ physical attractiveness	Other_Attractive
Other users’ non-physical traits (i.e., interests, morals)	Other_Traits
Were participants more likely to “match” with users with an attractive profile photo OR attractive profile biography	Match

\*Dichotomous variable

### Discussion

#### Analyses suggest partial support of hypotheses

- Stronger endorsement of masculinity was related to greater importance placed on physical attractiveness and lower importance on and other attributes when both viewing an online dating profile and preparing one’s own dating profile.
- Stronger endorsement of femininity was not significantly related to importance of either physical attractiveness or non-physical traits when viewing an online dating profile and preparing one’s own dating profile.
- Gender did not moderate this relationship.
- The dichotomous variable of matching preferences (photo OR biography) was not significant, but it did show trends in the same direction of other analyses.

### Limitations

- Sampling limitations - not representative; 2/3 of sample were women
- Survey may not have captured hyper-gender orientation
- Social desirability effects

### Future Directions

- Larger/representative sample
- Why online dating users do not match
- Online dating behaviors related to low-adhering gender roles and/or those who identify as non-binary/third gender

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