

Own attractiveness moderates the relationship between face preference and mate choice

Whether experimentally measured face preferences predict actual mate choice is critical for theories of human sexual selection¹. To date, the evidence for the relationship between mate preferences and choice gathered from face preference studies², self-report^{3,4}, or speed-dating studies⁵ have been mixed. However, people's own attractiveness may moderate the link between their preference and choice if individuals with higher market value are better able to obtain mates with characteristics they prefer.

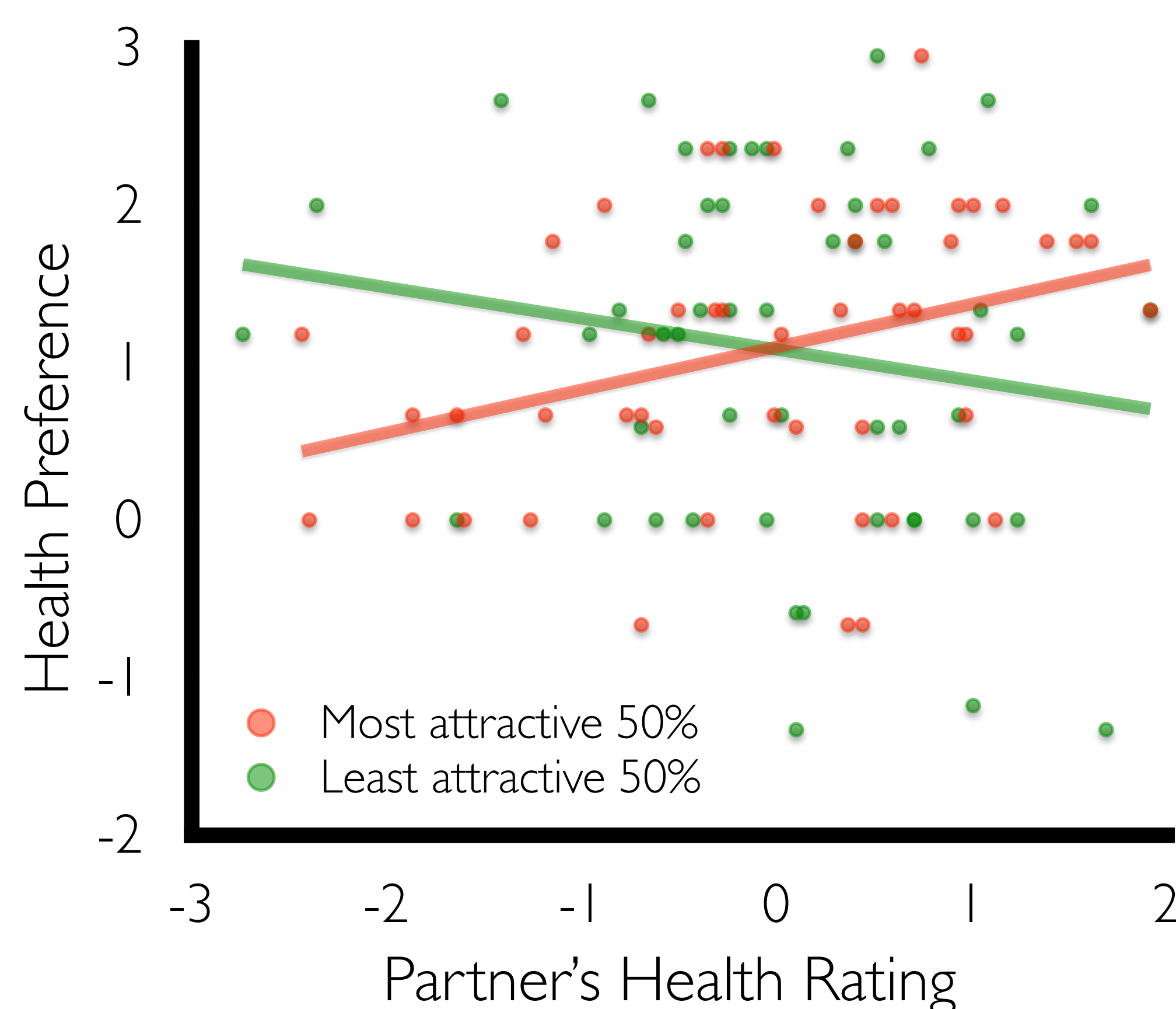
Measuring Health Preferences

51 white men and 51 white women in 51 heterosexual romantic couples selected the more attractive face from 10 pairs of other-sex faces where colour and texture cues associated with health had been manipulated⁶. *Health preference* scores were created by subtracting the chance value and dividing by the SD for each sex.



Rating Health and Attractiveness

Photographs of each participant (the 51 men and 51 women in the couples described above) were rated for health and attractiveness on 1 (low) to 7 (high) scales by 20 men and 20 women. Ratings were z-scored for each attribute and sex to produce *partner's health rating* and *own attractiveness rating* scores.



An initial multilevel regression (level 1: individual, level 2: couple) had participant's *health preference* (H_{pref}) as the dependent variable and *partner's health rating* (H_{ptnr}), *own attractiveness rating* (A_{own}), *own sex* and all possible interactions among these three variables were simultaneously entered as level 1 predictors. The only significant predictor of health preference was the interaction between *partner's health rating* and *own attractiveness rating* ($\beta = 0.32, z = 2.65, p = .008$). The equation below shows results after removing non-significant predictors (significant betas are underlined).

$$H_{pref} = 1.09 + 0.036 * H_{ptnr} + 0.025 * A_{own} + \underline{0.191} * H_{ptnr} * A_{own}$$

Here we show that the relationship between preferences for cues to apparent health and the apparent health of one's romantic partner depends on one's own attractiveness. As predicted, this relationship is more positive for more attractive individuals.

