

Do People Know What They Want in a Partner?

PREDICTING ROMANTIC MATCHES FROM
PREFERENCES & BEHAVIOR

Cheri Chu



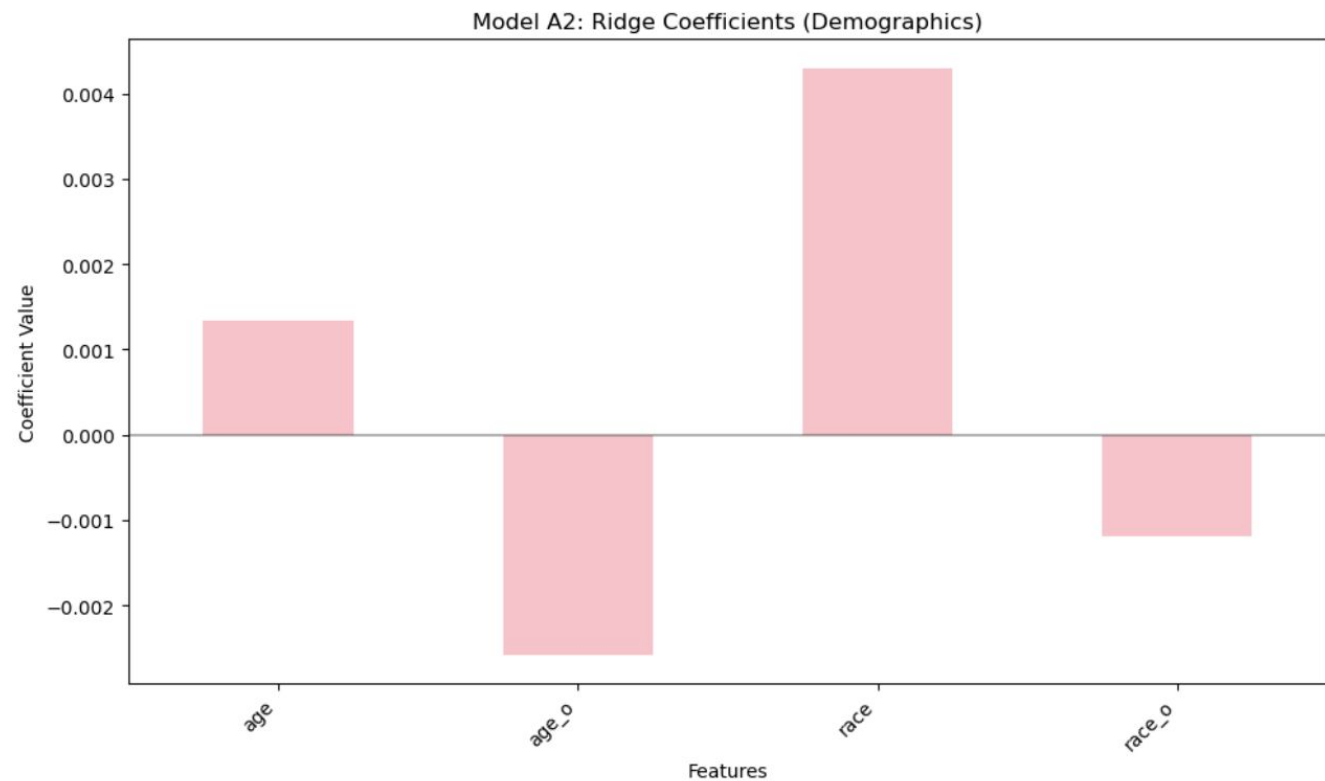
Research Questions

- People often can list out what they value in a romantic partner (e.g., fun, attractiveness, intelligence)
- But do these stated preferences actually predict who they choose?
- **We asked:**
 - Can we predict a mutual match using demographics?
 - Can we predict a mutual match using stated dating preferences?
 - If so, what preferences make a match more likely?
 - Do people's values align with their behavior?

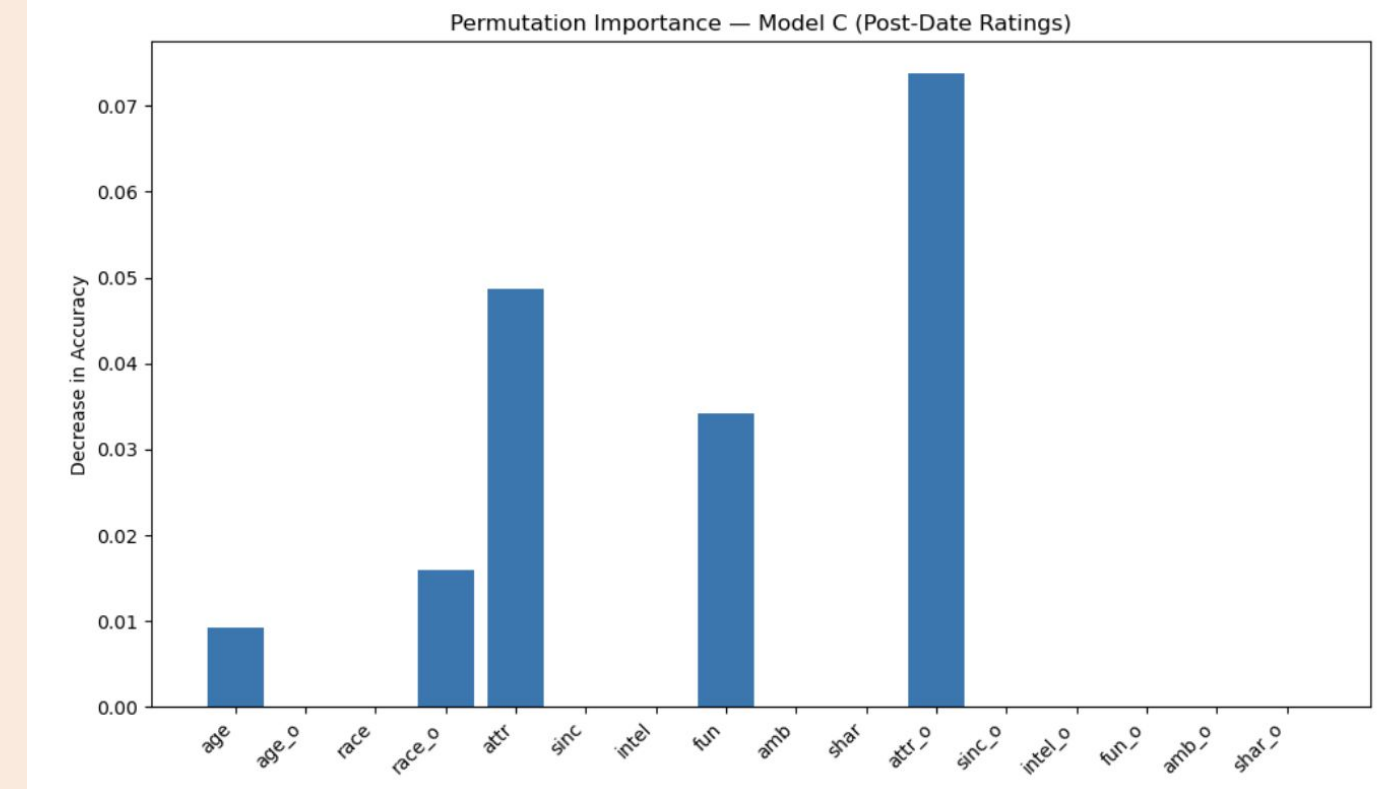
Dataset Overview (Speed Dating Study)

- 551 participants in a speed-dating event
- 4-minute dates between two people
- Before date: participants reported what they value in a partner
- After date: participants rated each other on multiple attributes
- Outcome: whether the pair mutually agreed to see each other again ("match")

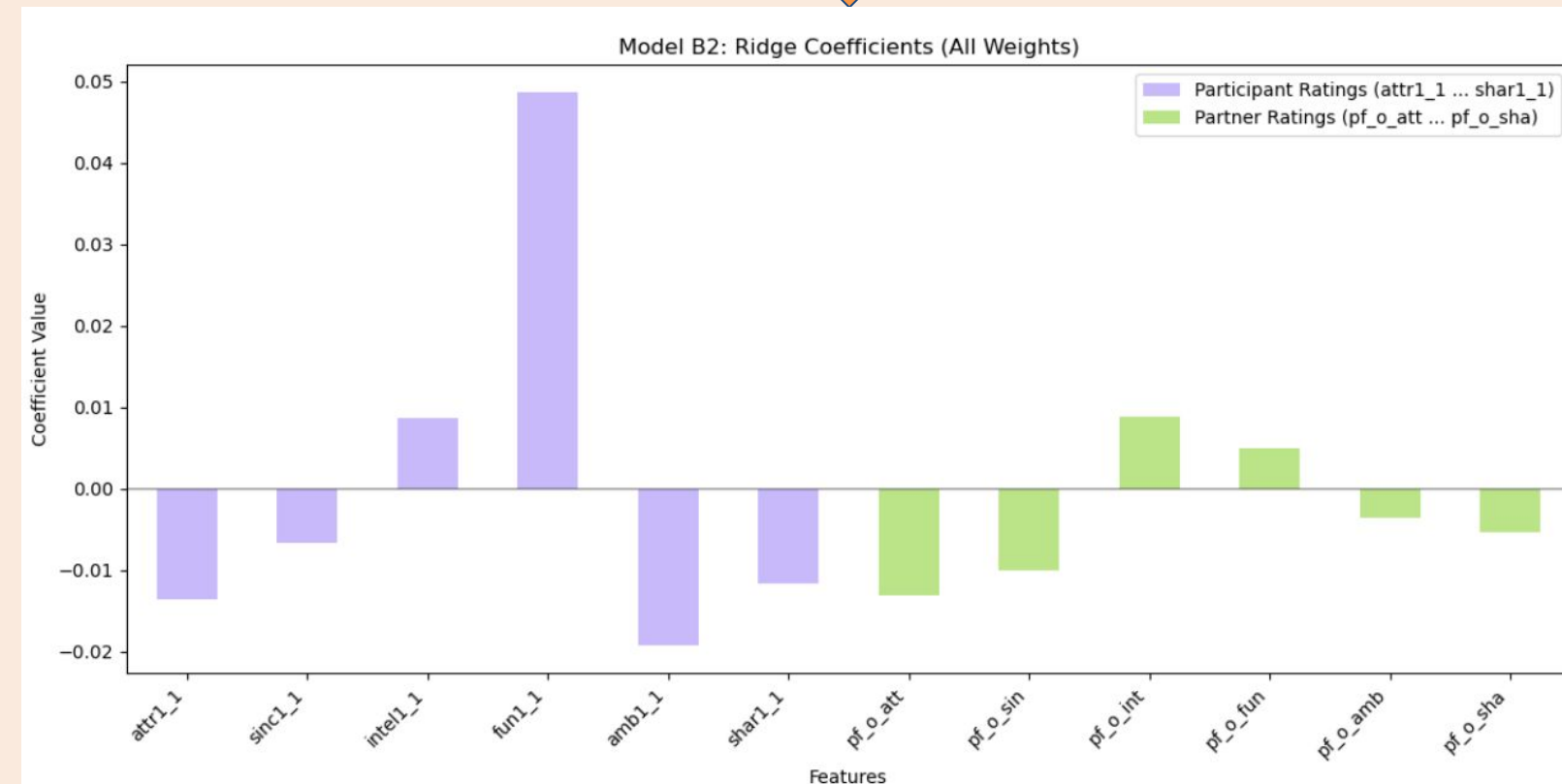
Results



- **Stated dating preferences → slightly better prediction:** valuing fun matters most; effects are small but meaningful; $AUC \approx 0.73$ (better than chance, like an educated guess)



- **Demographics alone do not meaningfully predict matches;** effects are near zero, and $AUC \approx 0.50$ = chance-level (coin-flip) performance



- **What actually happened mattered most when predicting a match:** how attractive and fun someone seemed after the date

What did we learn?



- Demographics(age, race) aren't a very good indicator of match
- People have some insight into what matters to them (especially fun), but stated preferences are **poor** at predicting real decisions
- There's a gap between what people *think* they value and what actually influences their choices
- Actual behavior might be driven more by impressions formed during the interaction, or other factors