You Are So Beautiful . . . to Me: Seeing Beyond Biases and Achieving Accuracy in Romantic Relationships

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Do romantic partners see each other realistically, or do they have overly positive perceptions of each other? Research has shown that realism and positivity co-exist in romantic partners' perceptions (Boyes & Fletcher, 2007). The current study takes a novel approach to explaining this seemingly paradoxical effect when it comes to physical attractiveness—a highly evaluative trait that is especially relevant to romantic relationships. Specifically, we argue that people are aware that others do not see their partners as positively as they do. Using both mean differences and correlational approaches, we test the hypothesis that despite their own biased and idiosyncratic perceptions, people have 2 types of partner-knowledge: insight into how their partners see themselves (i.e., identity accuracy) and insight into how others see their partners (i.e., reputation accuracy). Our results suggest that romantic partners have some awareness of each other's identity and reputation for physical attractiveness, supporting theories that couple members' perceptions are driven by motives to fulfill both esteem- and epistemic-related needs (i.e., to see their partners positively and realistically).

Keywords: interpersonal perception, bias, realism, attractiveness, romantic partners

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What do people know about their romantic partners? Being in a satisfying romantic relationship is one of the most important major life goals for adults (Roberts & Robins, 2000), and people have a strong desire to know and be known by their partners (Finkenauer & Righetti, 2011). Previous research has shown that there is a substantial amount of self-other agreement about personal characteristics among relationship partners (Fletcher & Kerr, 2010; Vazire & Carlson, 2010). However, partners may know more about each other than is captured by self-other agreement. For instance, do people know how their partners see themselves? Do people know their partners' reputations? In other words, are people aware that others may see their partners differently than they do?

Though perceptions in close relationships have been examined in a variety of ways (Finkenauer & Righetti, 2011), this question—how much people know about how others see their partners—has yet to be empirically tested. This question can shed light on the extent to which couple members really know each other (i.e., have accurate perceptions) beyond self—other agreement. Moreover, this research may shed light on which is more fundamental (and unique) to romantic relationships: positivity or accuracy—or both.

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Few studies have directly compared whether romantic partners in general are more biased than different types of close others, such as friends and family members (cf. Martz et al., 1998; Murray, Holmes, Dolderman, & Griffin, 2000; Rusbult, Kumashiro, Kubacka, & Finkel, 2009). Some of these findings suggest that romantic partners are more positively biased than friends (Murray et al., 2000), whereas other findings suggest that spouses see targets more accurately than do friends (Iafrate, Bertoni, Donato, & Finkenauer, 2012; Thomas & Fletcher, 2003). Both possibilities have important implications. If romantic partners are more biased than friends, positive illusions may be a fundamental feature of romantic relationships that distinguishes them from other close relationships. However, if romantic partners are more knowledgeable than friends, this would suggest that accuracy is fundamental to romantic relationships. Perhaps both conclusions are correct: Partners may be more biased than friends, but they may also have unique knowledge that friends lack. This could happen if romantic partners are biased in their own perceptions of their partners, but also know their partners' identity and reputation. Thus, to more fully understand whether positivity and accuracy are fundamental and unique to romantic relationships, we must (1) compare romantic partners' knowledge to friends' knowledge and (2) look beyond romantic partners' own perceptions of their partners and examine their knowledge of others' perceptions of their partners.

Positivity and Realism in Romantic Partners' Perceptions

In this section, we review the existing literature on social perceptions in romantic relationships. Previous research has established empirically that both positivity and self-other agreement are associated with greater relationship satisfaction and can coexist in partner-perceptions. We argue that, when it comes to physical attractiveness, partners can maintain both positive and realistic views of each other at a more conscious level. Specifically, romantic partners can have personally biased views of each other as well as knowledge of each other's identity and reputation, thus consciously juggling disparate perceptions.

Paradoxically Accurate and Positively Biased

On one hand, the well-known positivity bias among couples is consistent with the idea that people choose their romantic partners based on needs associated with self-esteem. People generally have a desire to be seen in a positive light (Alicke & Sedikides, 2009) and, as such, it is important for a target's romantic partner to see him/her positively, thereby fulfilling the target's esteem-related needs. Likewise, given that couple members reflect upon one another (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992), seeing a partner in an especially positive light is conducive to fulfilling one's own esteem-related needs (e.g., positive illusions model; Murray et al., 2000; Murray, Holmes, Griffin, 1996). Positive biases also make romantic partners feel good about their commitment to the relationship and motivate them to maintain involvement in the relationship (Gagné & Lydon, 2004). It is unsurprising then that having positive illusions about one's romantic relationship and partner is beneficial for relationship functioning and satisfaction (e.g., Fletcher, Simpson, & Boyes, 2006; Fowers, Lyons, & Montel, 1996; Gagné & Lydon, 2004; Rusbult, Van Lange, Wildschut, Yovetich, & Verette, 2000; Swann, De La Ronde, & Hixon, 1994).

On the other hand, the need to feel accepted and understood in one's relationship is consistent with the notion that people choose their romantic partners based on needs for validation (epistemic-related needs). People's desire to have a partner who sees them as they see themselves (i.e., self-other agreement) is consistent with self-verification theory (Swann, 1983). Moreover, Hardin and Conley's (2000) shared reality theory highlights the benefits of agreement within romantic couples. Given that self-partner agreement is necessary for intimacy and relationship satisfaction (Reis & Shaver, 1988), it is also unsurprising that there is a great deal of self-other agreement in romantic partners' perceptions (e.g., Kenny & Acitelli, 2001; Kobak & Hazan, 1991; Murray et al., 1996; Neff & Karney, 2005; Watson, Hubbard, & Wiese, 2000).

Resolving the Paradox

While bias and agreement may seem mutually exclusive, there is evidence that satisfied romantic partners can simultaneously be overly positive and realistic in their views of one another (e.g., Boyes & Fletcher, 2007; Luo & Snider, 2009; Neff & Karney, 2005). First, bias and agreement are typically measured using different data analytic approaches, and thus the two phenomena can be statistically independent (for a review, see Fletcher & Kerr, 2010). For example, people might overestimate how attractive their romantic partners are (i.e., bias), but the people who rate their partners as most attractive are actually with partners who are the most attractive (i.e., rank-order accuracy). Another way partners can be both biased and realistic is by being overly positive in their global evaluations of their partners (e.g., "I feel that my spouse has a number of good qualities") and realistic in their perceptions of their partners' specific traits and abilities (e.g., intellectual capa-

bility; Neff & Karney, 2005). A third way that bias and realism can co-exist is by having biased judgments of relationship-relevant dimensions (e.g., physical attractiveness), but agreeing on personally relevant dimensions (e.g., athletic ability; Swann, Bosson, & Pelham, 2002). These and other findings (e.g., Fletcher et al., 2006; Gagné & Lydon, 2004; Luo & Snider, 2009) suggest that couple members are capable of maintaining both biased and realistic views of their partners, and that this balance is important for relationship functioning.

However, none of these processes explain how partners could consciously hold both accurate and biased views of each other on a single characteristic—that is, how Mike could hold both realistic and positively biased views about his girlfriend Julie's attractiveness, and be consciously aware of both views. Even when bias and agreement are shown to coexist through two statistically independent operationalizations, the partners themselves are not conscious of holding simultaneously realistic and biased views; rather, agreement and bias coexist at a statistical level. In the current study, we present such a process: We investigate whether people (like Mike) can have overly positive perceptions of how physically attractive their romantic partners (like Julie) are while realizing that others (including Julie) do not share their views.

Are people capable of such sophisticated meta-perceptions (perceptions of others' perceptions)? With respect to physical attractiveness, research shows that, when guessing others' perceptions of them, women believe that others see them more positively than they see themselves (Dijkstra & Barelds, 2011). More generally, people are remarkably good at distinguishing how they see themselves from how others see them (Carlson & Furr, 2009; Carlson & Kenny, 2012; Carlson, Vazire, & Furr, 2011; Carlson, Vazire, & Oltmanns, 2011). Perhaps this meta-cognitive ability extends to perceptions of romantic partners as well. In the current study, we examine self-, partner-, and friend-perceptions of attractiveness and test whether romantic partners have positively biased and idiosyncratic views of attractiveness, but simultaneously know how their partners' self-views and friends' views of their partners differ from their own. This combination of (a) positivity and idiosyncrasy in partners' own views of targets' attractiveness and (b) meta-insight into others' perceptions of targets' attractiveness would serve to fulfill both esteem- and epistemic-related needs.

Why might romantic partners be uniquely positioned to have such insight? Vazire (2010) has argued, based on previous literature (e.g., John & Robins, 1993), that perceivers form more accurate impressions of a target when they have greater access to both the target's internal thoughts and feelings and overt behaviors across a range of contexts-both of which are sources of information that romantic partners are likely to have in spades. Indeed, research shows that accuracy in personality perceptions improves as relationship status goes from friendship to dating to marriage (Watson et al., 2000). Importantly, these increases in accuracy are due to increasing intimacy, not simply to increasing acquaintanceship duration (Letzring, Wells, & Funder, 2006; Watson & Clark, 1991). Presumably, romantic partners have high levels of intimacy and thus are positioned to know each other well (Vazire & Solomon, in press). Importantly, we argue that such knowledge extends beyond partners' own perceptions of targets.

How do romantic partners reconcile such knowledge with their positive illusions? Below, we discuss two specific examples of how partners can use their meta-cognitive skills to achieve insight into others' perceptions, thereby increasing their levels of partnerknowledge without threatening their own positive views of their partners.

Knowledge of Identity

One aspect of knowing a person is knowing how she sees herself (i.e., her identity). Although this conceptualization of otherknowledge is rare nowadays (cf. Simms, Zelazny, Yam, & Gros, 2010), it has a long history. In fact, historically, researchers used perceivers' predictions of targets' self-ratings as a way to measure other-knowledge (Bender & Hastorf, 1950; Cowden, 1955; Dymond, 1949; Gage & Cronbach, 1955; Taft, 1966). Similarly, empathy has also been used to examine knowledge and understanding of others. Empathic accuracy (the degree to which someone is able to infer a target person's thoughts and feelings) is positively correlated with motivational factors such as a target's physical attractiveness and a perceiver's interest in the target (Ickes, Stinson, Bissonnette, & Garcia, 1990). Empathy has also been conceptualized as a kind of social-cognitive bonding (Titchener, 1915). Thus, it is not surprising that empathic accuracy (Ickes & Simpson, 1997) and perspective taking (Schröder-Abé & Schütz, 2011) typically have positive effects on the quality of close relationships. Given that couple members, relative to others, tend to be especially motivated to understand each other and know what each other is thinking and feeling, romantic partners may have unique insight into each other's identities. To examine whether identity accuracy is unique to romantic partners, we test whether romantic partners or friends have more knowledge about how targets perceive their own attractiveness.

Knowledge of Reputation

Another aspect of knowing a person is knowing how he is seen by others (i.e., his reputation). This type of other-knowledge has received virtually no attention in the person perception literature. One exception is the small body of research examining third-party meta-perception (Kenny, 1994; Kenny & DePaulo, 1993; Laing, Phillipson, & Lee, 1966), which reflects how one person thinks another person perceives a third person. Research suggests that regardless of people's own impressions of a target, they have the ability to take another person's perspective about the target. For instance, people can accurately guess how much another person likes a target (Kenny, Bond, Mohr, & Horn, 1996). It may be the case that people perceive their partners as very attractive, yet also have insight into their partners' reputation for being (un)attractive. Currently, little is known about the degree to which romantic partners are in touch (or out of touch) with reality—do they know whether others share their positive illusions?

Hypotheses

Our study examines the extent to which people know their partners—beyond self-partner agreement—by examining knowledge of identity and reputation (i.e., identity and reputation accuracy, respectively) regarding physical attractiveness. Also, whenever possible, we compare the effects found among romantic partners to parallel effects among friends to test whether the effects found among romantic partners are unique to romantic relation-

ships. Moreover, because both self- and partner-ratings of physical attractiveness are likely to be positively biased (Barelds & Dijkstra, 2011), collecting friends' perceptions also provides another benchmark against which to test the positivity, as well as idiosyncrasy, of partners' ratings. Although we test several hypotheses about friend-knowledge, our main hypotheses focus on romantic partners' perceptions.

We predict that romantic partners simultaneously have biased, unique, and realistic perceptions of their partners when it comes to physical attractiveness. This prediction is broken into five hypotheses listed in Table 1. We predict that despite the positivity (Hypothesis 1 [H1]: at the mean level, partners' perceptions of targets' attractiveness are positively biased compared to targets' self-perceptions and friends' perceptions) and idiosyncrasy (Hypothesis 2 [H2]: partners' perceptions of targets' attractiveness correlate weakly with targets' self-perceptions and friends' perceptions) of romantic partners' own perceptions of targets' attractiveness, romantic partners achieve identity accuracy (Hypothesis 3 [H3]) and reputation accuracy (Hypothesis 5 [H5]); that is, they are aware of how their partners see themselves and how they are seen by others, respectively. We also predict that the ability to achieve identity accuracy is unique to romantic partners (i.e., friends do not have such knowledge; Hypothesis 4 [H4]).

To provide a first test of these phenomena, we examine a highly evaluative and relationship-relevant characteristic—physical attractiveness. Perceived and actual physical attractiveness are both associated with levels of commitment, intimacy, passion, and satisfaction (Sangrador & Yela, 2000) and quality (Barelds & Dijkstra, 2009; McNulty, Neff, & Karney, 2008) in ongoing relationships. Given that positive biases are more prominent for traits that are central to romantic partner evaluation (Boyes & Fletcher, 2007), we selected physical attractiveness because it is both highly evaluative and highly relevant for mate selection and assessment in romantic relationships (Buss & Barnes, 1986; Eastwick, Eagly, Finkel, & Johnson, 2011; Rowatt, DeLue, Strickhouser, & Gonzalez, 2001).

Unsurprisingly, idiosyncratic perceptions of others (i.e., relationship effects in Social Relations Model analyses) are the largest source of variance in interpersonal attraction (Back, Schmukle, & Egloff, 2010). Thus, although there tends to be a great deal of consensus about physical attractiveness among unbiased judges (Langlois et al., 2000), idiosyncrasy likely contributes to partners' interpersonal perceptions. Moreover, accuracy varies with trait relevance, such that socially relevant and desirable traits are associated with lower levels of self-other agreement (Koestner, Bernieri, & Zuckerman, 1994). Finally, when it comes to physical attractiveness, people want evaluations from their romantic partners that are more positive than their own self-perceptions, while preferring their partners to see them as they see themselves on traits that are not relationship-relevant (Swann et al., 2002). For all these reasons, when judging the other couple member's physical attractiveness, romantic partners should have strong positive biases and idiosyncratic perceptions, providing us with an opportunity to examine whether romantic partners are able to see beyond their

¹ We did not collect perceived reputation ratings from friends given that friends' ratings comprise the measure of reputation; thus, we did not compute reputation accuracy for friends.

Table 1
Bias and Accuracy in Perceptions of Physical Attractiveness: Hypotheses and Summary of Results

No.	Hypothesis	Result
Hypothesis 1 Hypothesis 2	Romantic partners are positively biased in their own perceptions of targets. Romantic partners have idiosyncratic perceptions (i.e., low agreement with targets and friends).	Supported Partially supported
Hypothesis 3	Romantic partners know how targets see themselves (i.e., have identity accuracy).	Mostly supported
Hypothesis 4	Identity accuracy is unique to romantic partners, that is, romantic partners' identity accuracy is higher than friends'.	Supported
Hypothesis 5	Romantic partners know how others see targets (i.e., have reputation accuracy).	Mostly supported

own biased and idiosyncratic views and achieve identity and reputation accuracy. As the title of this article implies, we may indeed believe that our romantic partners are beautiful, but also know that some of that beauty exists only when looking through our own rosy perceptual lenses.

Method

Participants and Procedures

Participants (also referred to as targets) in the current study were a subset of undergraduates who participated in one of five larger studies (Studies 1–5; total $N_S = 330$, 143, 123, 208, and 218, respectively) at Washington University in St. Louis. Participants included in the present investigation were selected based on inclusion criteria described below (total N for present study = 195). All participants completed self-report questionnaires about their personalities and other attributes and completed a variety of other tasks. Studies 1, 2, 4, and 5 recruited participants via the Psychology Department Human Subject Pool through which students signed up to participate in a laboratory study for course credit or monetary compensation. In Study 3, participants were students in a personality course who completed the questionnaires as part of class activities and consented to have their responses used for research purposes.

Targets were asked to nominate several informants (6, 3, 5, 6, and 8 informants in Studies 1–5, respectively) who knew them well and would be willing to complete an online questionnaire about the targets' personalities and attributes. Targets nominated a romantic partner informant (when applicable) and 4, 2, 3, 4, and 6 friend informants in Studies 1–5, respectively (other informants were mostly family members). Informants were e-mailed within 1 week of their nomination explaining why the informant was contacted and providing instructions for completing the online questionnaire (Vazire, 2006). Informants and targets were told that the targets would not have access to the informants' ratings. Up to three reminder e-mails (one time per week) were sent to informants. Informants were not compensated for their involvement. The overall response rates for informants were between 46% and 85%.

Inclusion criteria. Only targets who had both a romantic partner and at least one friend complete the informant questionnaire were included in the current investigation. Also, targets in Study 2 were randomly assigned to one of three conditions for completing questionnaires, thus for the current investigation, only targets in the control condition were included. Using these criteria, 195 of the 1,022 potential targets (19%) were included. In the final

dataset, the "friend" ratings were used only if they came from peers that were unrelated to the targets (i.e., we excluded informant reports that came from family members, coaches, etc.). For targets with more than one friend, we randomly selected one friend to measure *friend identity accuracy* because targets had only one romantic partner; thus, in order to make the friend and partner identity accuracy results comparable, using only one friend was necessary. However, we aggregated all available friends' ratings to compute criterion measures of targets' reputations (for analyzing romantic partners' *reputation accuracy*).

Merging five studies into two samples. We merged participants from these five studies into two samples. It was necessary to create two samples rather than one because the Likert-type scales used in the questionnaires varied from study to study. Specifically, in Studies 1 and 2, ratings were made on a 7-point scale, and participants were combined into Sample 1. In Studies 3, 4, and 5, ratings were made on a 15-point scale, and these participants were combined into Sample 2. We standardized and combined samples whenever possible, but we needed to keep samples separate and unstandardized for mean-level analyses given that standardizing variables erases mean differences.

For Sample 1 (Studies 1 and 2), 83 of the 473 participants met the inclusion criteria. Of these 83 targets (32 males; mean age = 19.7 years), approximately 68% were Caucasian, 11% were Asian or Asian American, 11% were African American or Black, 2% were Latin American and/or Hispanic, 4% were Native American, and 4% were Middle Eastern or Arab American. In this sample, romantic partners and friends knew targets for an average of 2.4 and 4.7 years, respectively.

For Sample 2 (Studies 3, 4, and 5), 112 of the 549 participants met the inclusion criteria. Of these 112 targets (40 males; mean age = 19.8 years), approximately 72% were Caucasian, 17% were Asian or Asian American, 4% were African American or Black, 6% were Latin American or Hispanic, and 1% were Middle Eastern or Arab American.³ In this sample, partners and friends knew targets for an average of 3.2 and 5.4 years, respectively.

Measures. Targets provided self-perceptions on a questionnaire to assess target identity (how targets see themselves). Ro-

² Because the samples are subsets of larger studies, targets completed other tasks as part of their participation. The data collected from such tasks were not used in the current analyses but are used in Carlson and Furr (2013); Carlson (2013); Tenney, Vazire, and Mehl (2013); and Bollich and Vazire (2014). The analyses presented here do not overlap with those articles and have not been published elsewhere.

³ In Study 4, a coding error may have inflated the number of participants described as Caucasian, as participants who described their race/ethnicity

mantic partners and friends completed the same questionnaire, but instead of providing self-perceptions, these informants provided their own impressions of targets (how they perceive the targets; e.g., "My romantic partner is physically attractive") and their perceived identity ratings of targets (how they believe the targets see themselves; e.g., "My romantic partner sees him/herself as physically attractive").4 Perceived identity ratings were collected from all informants in every study except for Study 5, in which friends did not provide these ratings. In Studies 2, 3, 4, and 5, romantic partners also provided perceived reputation ratings of targets (how partners believe others see the targets; e.g., "Other people see my romantic partner as physically attractive").⁵ The raters indicated the extent to which they agreed with each statement about the targets' physical attractiveness, and these are the ratings we used in our analyses. The descriptive anchors for the 7-point scale were $1 = Disagree\ Strongly$, $2 = Disagree\ Mostly$, $3 = Disagree \ a \ Little, 4 = Neither \ Agree \ nor \ Disagree, 5 = Agree$ a Little, $6 = Agree\ Mostly$, and $7 = Agree\ Strongly$. The descriptive anchors for the 15-point scale were 1 = Disagree Strongly, 8 = Neither Agree/Disagree (with the labels Disagree Moderately between 3 and 4 and Disagree a Little between 5 and 6), and 15 = Agree Strongly (with the labels Agree a Little between 10 and 11 and Agree Moderately between 12 and 13). The attractiveness items were displayed simultaneously, and ratings could be changed if a subsequent item led to further deliberation about a previous rating—as such, counter-balancing the order of items was unnecessary.

Analyses. We measured accuracy by examining bias and agreement. To examine bias, we conducted paired samples *t*-tests comparing ratings provided by targets, romantic partners, and friends in accordance with our hypotheses. Because absolute values were relevant for these *t*-tests, and because Samples 1 and 2 used different Likert-type scales, we computed these *t*-tests separately for each sample. To examine agreement, we used the approach of correlating perceptions. Because absolute levels are not important for correlational analyses, we were able to combine the two samples for these analyses by standardizing scores within each study before combining them.

Results

Descriptive Statistics: Perceptions of Attractiveness (H1 and H2)

How physically attractive do people think their romantic partners are? Table 2 includes the means and standard deviations for, as well as the intercorrelations among, each type of rating that we used to test our hypotheses. Before testing for evidence of identity and reputation accuracy, we examined the positivity of targets' and informants' own perceptions.⁶ For each sample, we conducted separate paired samples *t*-tests comparing each of the following perceptions of targets: self- versus romantic partner-perceptions, self- versus friend-perceptions, and romantic partners would have positively biased perceptions when compared to targets and friends, and friends would have positively biased perceptions when compared to targets. The results (see Figure 1) indicated that both romantic partner- and friend-perceptions of targets are more pos-

itive than targets' self-perceptions. Consistent with our prediction (H1), romantic partners have the most positive perceptions of targets' physical attractiveness (compared to self-perceptions, in Sample 1: t(74) = 12.77, p < .01, $M_{\text{diff}} = 1.79$, 95% CI [1.51, 2.07], d = 1.98; in Sample 2: t(102) = 13.20, p < .01, $M_{\text{diff}} =$ 3.71, 95% CI [3.15, 4.27], d = 1.83; all *p*-values in this article are two-tailed), followed by friends (compared to self-perceptions, in Sample 1: t(73) = 5.05, p < .01, $M_{\text{diff}} = 0.86$, 95% CI [0.52, 1.21], d = 0.71; in Sample 2: t(105) = 3.54, p < .01, $M_{\text{diff}} = 1.28$, 95% CI [0.56, 2.00], d = 0.44). Moreover, romantic partners' perceptions of targets are significantly more positive than friends' perceptions of targets (Sample 1: t(77) = 5.51, p < .01, $M_{\text{diff}} =$ 0.90, 95% CI [0.57, 1.22], d = 0.84; in Sample 2: t(105) = 7.53, $p < .01, M_{\text{diff}} = 2.51, 95\%$ CI [1.85, 3.17], d = 0.96). Thus, our first hypothesis (H1) was supported: Romantic partners' perceptions of physical attractiveness are biased (and the most positive). This finding is consistent with the literature (e.g., Gagné & Lydon, 2004; Murray et al., 1996, 2000) and builds upon previous research by showing that romantic partners are positively biased even when compared to friends' perceptions.

We also examined the correlations among targets' self-ratings, romantic partners' ratings, and friends' ratings of attractiveness to assess whether romantic partners' perceptions are idiosyncratic (H2). We expected that partners' ratings would correlate weakly with targets' and friends' ratings. After combining Samples 1 and 2, we computed the level of agreement among the three perceptions (self, partner, friend). The results showed that self–partner agreement, r = .08 (p = .27, 95% CI [-.07, .23]), is weak; self–friend agreement, r = .25 (p < .01, 95% CI [.10, .38]), is moderate; and friend–partner agreement, r = .19 (p = .01, 95% CI [.05, .33]), is also moderate. Of note, using a measure of consensus in which we took the weighted averages of the pairwise correla-

When we examined sex differences based on the sex of the perceiver we found that (1) female friends' ratings of targets were more positive than male friends' ratings of targets (in Sample 1: t(78) = 2.82, p = .01; in Sample 2: t(108) = 2.58, p = .01) and (2) female friends rated targets' self-perceptions more positively than male friends rated targets' self-perceptions in Sample 1 but not in Sample 2, t(78) = 2.47, p = .02, and t(57) = 0.62, p = .54, respectively. Thus, not taking into account the sex of the target, female friends tend to rate targets as being more attractive than do males. Of note, target–friend dyads tended to be same-sex (approximately 82%). We also found that approximately 98% of target–partner dyads were opposite-sex, and approximately 83% of partner–friend dyads were opposite-sex.

as "Other" were also coded as Caucasian. Thus, 21% of the participants in Sample 2 were either Caucasian or "Other."

⁴ The exact wording of the prompt for perceived identity ratings varied slightly across studies, but the instructions were the same.

⁵ The exact wording of the prompt for perceived reputation ratings varied slightly across studies, but the instructions were the same.

⁶ We examined whether there were sex differences in our analyses based on the sex of the target. The only significant differences we found were as follows: (1) friends' ratings of female targets' attractiveness were more positive than friends' ratings of male targets (in Sample 1: t(73) = 3.04, p < .01; in Sample 2: t(105) = 2.93, p < .01); (2) friends rated female targets' self-perceptions of attractiveness more positively than friends rated male targets' self-perceptions, but only in one sample (in Sample 1, t(73) = 0.77, p = .44; in Sample 2: t(54) = 2.23, p = .03); and (3) reputation measures of attractiveness were higher for female targets than male targets (in Sample 1: t(75) = 3.67, p < .01; in Sample 2: t(106) = 3.57, p < .01). In short, people who are not romantically invested in the target tend to perceive females as more attractive than males.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations Among Key Study Variables (Perceptions of Physical Attractiveness)

	N		M (SD)		Partner- perception		Friend- perception		Partner perceived identity		Friend perceived identity		Partner perceived reputation	Reputation
Variable	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 2	Sample 2
Target self-perception	77	107	4.82 (1.12)	10.15 (1.12)	.12	.01	.27*	.20*	.29*	.37*	.35*	01	.09	.15
Partner-perception	81	108	6.56 (0.63)	13.84 (1.55)			.12	.19	.12	.04	09	.15	.61*	.20*
Friend-perception Partner perceived	80	110	5.64 (1.36)	11.41 (3.34)					.28*	.30*	.58*	.39*	.44*	.87*
identity	81	108	5.00 (1.19)	10.76 (3.06)							.27*	.18	.37*	.25*
Friend perceived														
identity	80	59	5.06 (1.33)	11.14 (3.05)									.20*	.42*
Partner perceived														
reputation		108		12.47 (2.29)										.43*
Reputation		111		11.46 (2.50)										

Note. Reputation is the aggregate of all available friends' ratings. p < .05, two-tailed.

tions among friends, we found that friends (N = 282) do at least tend to agree with each other about targets' attractiveness, r = .36 (p < .01). In other words, our second hypothesis (H2) was partially supported: Romantic partners' perceptions of attractiveness do not agree with targets and agree only somewhat with friends.

We also conducted exploratory analyses to examine whether there are significant differences among any of these correlations (using the Williams modification of Hotelling's t-test (Kenny, 1987) and Zou's (2007) method for calculating asymptotic confidence intervals for the difference between overlapping correlations). No significant differences emerged: for self–partner versus self–friend agreement, t(176) = -1.82, p = .07, $r_{\rm diff} = .18$, 95% CI [-.34, .02]; for self–friend versus friend–partner agreement, t(179) = 0.61, p = .54, $r_{\rm diff} = .06$, 95% CI [-.25, .14]; and for friend–partner versus self–partner agreement, t(178) = 1.22, p = .22, $r_{\rm diff} = .11$, 95% CI [-.07, .28]. In summary, all agreement correlations are relatively weak, suggesting that romantic partners, friends, and the self each have rather idiosyncratic views of targets' attractiveness (though consensus among friends was substantial, suggesting less idiosyncrasy in their views).

Romantic Partner Identity Accuracy (H3)

Do romantic partners know how their partners see themselves when it comes to physical attractiveness? To shed light on this question, we examined romantic partner *identity accuracy* (romantic partners' knowledge of targets' self-views) in two ways.

Means. First, separately for each sample (using unstandardized variables), we conducted paired samples *t*-tests comparing romantic partners' *perceived identity* ratings of targets (how partners think targets see themselves) to targets' self-perceptions and to romantic partners' own perceptions of targets, respectively. As mentioned above, romantic partners' perceptions of targets are more positive than targets' self-perceptions. We predicted that romantic partners' perceived identity ratings would be significantly less positive than partners' own perceptions, and would not be significantly different from targets' actual self-perceptions. The results (see Figure 2) indicated that when inferring targets' selfviews, romantic partners' perceived identity ratings are less positive than are their own perceptions of targets (Sample 1:

 $t(80) = -10.90, p < .01, M_{\rm diff} = -1.56, 95\%$ CI [-1.84, -1.27], d = -1.63; Sample 2: $t(107) = -9.50, p < .01, M_{\rm diff} = -3.08, 95\%$ CI [-3.73, -2.44], d = -1.27) but are still more positive than targets' actual self-perceptions (Sample 1: $t(74) = 1.79, p = .08, M_{\rm diff} = 0.28, 95\%$ CI [-0.03, 0.59], d = 0.25; Sample 2: $t(102) = 2.20, p = .03, M_{\rm diff} = 0.68, 95\%$ CI [0.07, 1.29], d = 0.25). These findings suggest that, consistent with our hypothesis (H3), although romantic partners see targets in an especially positive light, they know that their own perceptions are more positive than targets' self-perceptions. Nevertheless, our hypothesis was not fully supported, given that partners still overestimate the positivity of targets' self-perceptions, thereby underestimating the discrepancy between their positive views of targets and how targets see themselves.

Correlations. In order to further examine the extent to which romantic partners achieve identity accuracy, after combining Samples 1 and 2 (using standardized variables), we computed the correlation between romantic partners' perceived identity ratings of targets and targets' self-perceptions. As described above, self-partner agreement is weak (r=.08, p=.27). However, the results for identity accuracy indicated that romantic partners' ratings of how targets see themselves do correlate moderately with targets' self-reports (r=.35, p<.01, 95% CI [.21, .47]), and this correlation is significantly greater than the self-partner agreement correlation, t(175)=2.73, p=.01, $t_{\rm diff}=.27$, 95% CI [.07, .45]. This finding provided additional support for the hypothesis (H3) that romantic partners have knowledge of the extent to which targets see themselves as physically attractive.

Altogether, both mean level comparisons and correlational analyses provided evidence for romantic partner identity accuracy (H3): When it comes to physical attractiveness, romantic partners seem to have some awareness of the differences between how they see their partners and how their partners see themselves.

 $^{^7}$ For each test of the difference between dependent correlations, we used the Williams modification of Hotelling's *t*-test (Kenny, 1987) and Zou's (2007) method for calculating asymptotic confidence intervals, which accounts for the skewness of the sampling distributions using Fisher's r to z transformation and provides a range of possible parameter values.

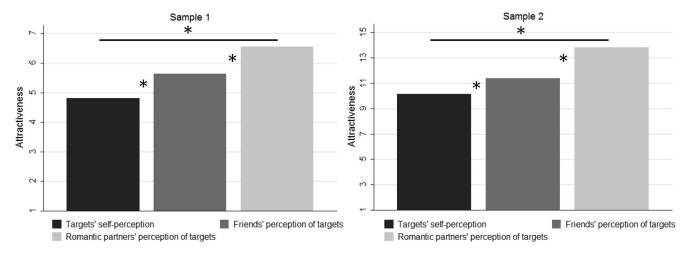


Figure 1. Mean differences among targets' self-perceptions, friends' perceptions of targets, and romantic partners' perceptions of targets (regarding targets' physical attractiveness). * p < .05, two-tailed. N = 83 in Sample 1, and N = 112 in Sample 2.

Friend Versus Romantic Partner Identity Accuracy (H4)

Do friends also have insight into targets' identities? Here we tested whether identity accuracy is unique to romantic partners.

Means. First, separately for each sample (using unstandardized variables), we conducted paired samples *t*-tests comparing friends' *perceived identity* ratings of targets (how friends think targets see themselves) to targets' self-perceptions and to friends' own perceptions of targets, respectively. As mentioned above, friends' perceptions of targets are more positive than targets' self-perceptions. We predicted that friends would not have privileged knowledge about targets and thus would not achieve identity accuracy. Specifically, we expected that friend perceived identity ratings would not differ from friends' own perceptions of targets, and would be significantly different from targets' actual self-perceptions. The results (see Figure 3) were somewhat mixed. In Sample 1, the results indicated that when inferring targets' self-

views, friends' perceived identity ratings are significantly less positive than their own impressions of targets, t(79) = -4.15, p < $.01, M_{\text{diff}} = -0.58, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.85, -0.30], d = -0.43, \text{ and more}$ positive than targets' actual self-perceptions, t(73) = 2.07, p =.04, $M_{\text{diff}} = 0.32$, 95% CI [0.01, 0.64], d = 0.28. On the other hand, in Sample 2, our hypothesis was supported—there is no difference between friends' perceived identity ratings and their own impressions of targets, t(58) = -0.99, p = .33, $M_{\text{diff}} = -0.46, 95\% \text{ CI } [-1.38, 0.47], d = -0.14, \text{ but their}$ perceived identity ratings are significantly more positive than targets' actual self-perceptions, t(54) = 2.90, p = .01, $M_{\text{diff}} =$ 1.55, 95% CI [0.48, 2.61], d = 0.56. Due to the inconsistent findings and smaller sample size in Sample 2, we hesitate to draw strong conclusions. However, these findings somewhat parallel those found for romantic partners, and suggest that, like romantic partners (and contrary to our hypothesis), friends seem to see targets in a positive light but know that their own perceptions

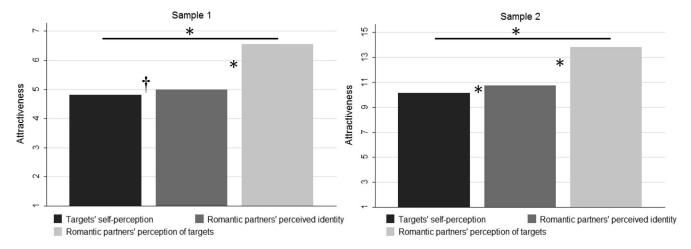


Figure 2. Romantic partner identity accuracy: Mean differences in ratings of physical attractiveness. $^{\dagger}p < .10$. $^{*}p < .05$, two-tailed. N = 83 in Sample 1, and N = 112 in Sample 2.

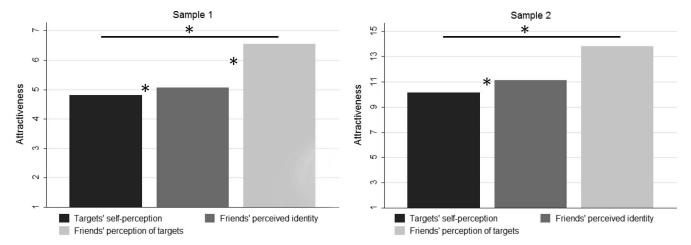


Figure 3. Friend identity accuracy: Mean differences in ratings of physical attractiveness. * p < .05, two-tailed. N = 83 in Sample 1, and N = 112 in Sample 2. (In Sample 2, N = 59 for friends' perceived identity, as perceived identity ratings were not collected from friends in Study 5.)

differ from how targets see themselves. Nevertheless, like romantic partners, friends may also overestimate the positivity of targets' self-perceptions, somewhat underestimating their own biases.

Correlations. We next examined the extent to which friends achieve identity accuracy using a correlational approach. As with romantic partners' ratings, after combining Samples 1 and 2, we computed the correlation between friends' perceived identity ratings of targets and targets' self-perceptions. As described above, self-friend agreement is moderate (r = .25, p < .01). The results indicated that friends' ratings of how targets see themselves are correlated even less with targets' self-reports, although the correlation reaches statistical significance (r = .20, p = .03, 95% CI [.02, .36]). This friend identity accuracy correlation is not significantly different from the self-friend agreement correlation, t(155) = 0.62, p = .54, $r_{\text{diff}} = -.05$, 95% CI [-.22, .11]. This result suggests that friends' knowledge of targets' self-perceptions of attractiveness is no different than the baseline level of selffriend agreement. From a correlational perspective, friends do not have insight into how targets see themselves.8

The findings thus far suggest that, compared to friends, romantic partners have more awareness of how their own perceptions of targets' physical attractiveness differ from targets' selfperceptions. To further examine the extent to which friends versus romantic partners have insight into targets' self-views of attractiveness, we conducted two multiple regressions. First, we predicted targets' self-perceptions (dependent variable [DV]) from romantic partners' perceived identity ratings, controlling for romantic partners' own impressions of targets. The results indicated that romantic partners' perceived identity ratings have incremental validity over romantic partners' own perceptions of targets' attractiveness when predicting targets' self-views, b = .36, p < .01, 95% CI [.21, .50]. Second, we predicted targets' self-perceptions (DV) from friends' perceived identity ratings, controlling for friends' own impressions of targets. Unlike the romantic partners' perceived identity ratings, the results indicated that friends' perceived identity ratings do not have incremental validity over friends' own perceptions of targets' attractiveness when predicting targets' self-views, b = .13, p = .22, 95% CI [-.08, .33].

We also conducted a multiple regression in which we predicted targets' self-perceptions (DV) from romantic partners' perceived identity ratings and friends' perceived identity ratings simultaneously. We found that romantic partners' perceived identity ratings uniquely predict targets' self-perceptions, b = .32, p < .01, 95% CI [.14, .49], whereas friends' perceived identity ratings do not, b = .15, p = .08, 95% CI [-.02, .33].

Finally, we directly compared the magnitude of the romantic partner and friend identity accuracy correlations. Somewhat inconsistent with our hypothesis (H4), romantic partner identity accuracy (r=.35) is not significantly stronger than friend identity accuracy (r=.20), t(151)=1.57, p=.12, $r_{\rm diff}=.15$, 95% CI [-.04, .34]. However, this is an especially conservative test of friend versus romantic partner identity accuracy, and in light of the results presented above, we found that overall our findings mostly supported our hypothesis that identity accuracy is relatively unique to romantic partners.

Reputation Accuracy (H5)

Do romantic partners know how others see their partners when it comes to physical attractiveness? To address this question, we tested whether romantic partners achieve *reputation accuracy* (i.e., have knowledge of targets' reputations). We first examined reputation accuracy by comparing mean ratings using data only from Sample 2 (N=112), because *perceived reputation* ratings (how romantic partners think others see targets) were not collected in one of the studies that comprises Sample 1, leaving only 11 participants from Sample 1 with perceived reputation ratings. However, when conducting correlational analyses we were able to

⁸ We also used an aggregate of friends' perceived identity ratings in a post hoc exploratory analysis to test whether this estimate for each target was correlated with targets' self-reports. We found that similar to selecting one random friend, the aggregate was only moderately correlated with targets' actual self-views (r = .25, p < 01), which was neither different from self-friend nor self-reputation agreement (where reputation is the aggregate of friends' perceptions of targets (r = .19, p = .01), t(171) = 0.00, p = 1.00, and t(172) = 0.85, p = .40).

use the available data from the 11 participants in Sample 1, thus increasing our total sample size to 123.

Means. First, we conducted paired samples t-tests comparing romantic partners' perceived reputation ratings of targets to targets' reputations and to romantic partners' perceptions of targets, respectively. As mentioned above, romantic partners' perceptions of targets are more positive than friends' perceptions of targets. However, the analyses involving reputations were different because they were based on aggregate ratings by up to six friends, whereas the previous analyses involving friends were based on a single friend's rating so that we could appropriately compare romantic partners' and friends' perceptions. We predicted that although romantic partners' own perceptions of targets would be more positive than targets' reputations, romantic partners' perceived reputation ratings would be less positive than partners' own perceptions, and would not be significantly different from targets' actual reputations. Recall that romantic partners' perceptions of targets are significantly more positive than targets' reputations, $t(106) = 9.28, p < .01, M_{\text{diff}} = 2.42, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.90, 2.94], d =$ 1.15. Our analyses (see Figure 4) indicated that romantic partners' perceived reputation ratings are less positive than their own impressions of targets, t(107) = -7.82, p < .01, $M_{\text{diff}} = -1.37$, 95% CI [-1.72, -1.02], d = -0.70, but are still more positive than targets' actual reputations, t(106) = 4.14, p < .01, $M_{diff} = 1.04$, 95% CI [0.54, 1.53], d = 0.43. These findings suggest that, consistent with our hypothesis (H5), although romantic partners see targets in an especially positive light, they know that their own perceptions differ from how outsiders of the relationship see the targets. Nevertheless, our hypothesis was not fully supported, given that partners still overestimate the positivity of others' perceptions, again underestimating their own biases.

Correlations. In order to further examine the extent to which romantic partners achieve reputation accuracy, we computed the correlation between romantic partners' perceived reputation ratings of targets and targets' reputations. As described above, friend–partner agreement is moderate (r = .19, p = .01), but this correlation uses a single randomly selected friend. The more relevant correlation for comparison with reputation accuracy is

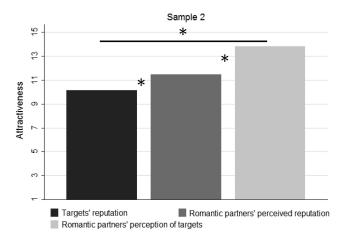


Figure 4. Romantic partner reputation accuracy: Mean differences in ratings of physical attractiveness. * p < .05, two-tailed. N = 112. Reputation is the aggregate of all available friends' ratings.

reputation—partner agreement (using an aggregate of all friends as a measure of reputation), which is weak (r=.13, p=.08, 95% CI [-.01, .27]). We predicted that partners' reputation accuracy—the correlation between romantic partners' perceived reputation ratings and actual reputation—should be stronger than this reputation—partner agreement correlation. Consistent with this prediction, romantic partners' perceived reputation ratings correlate strongly with targets' reputations (r=.43, p<.01, 95% CI [.27, .57]), and this correlation is significantly greater than the reputation—partner agreement correlation, t(150)=4.54, p<.01, $r_{\rm diff}=.30$, 95% CI [.16, .43].

As with identity accuracy, both mean level comparisons and correlational analyses provided evidence for romantic partner reputation accuracy: When it comes to physical attractiveness, consistent with H5, romantic partners seem to have some awareness of how others see targets beyond their own perceptions of targets. To underscore the importance of this finding, a correlation of .43 is about as high as accuracy gets in person perception research (Vazire & Carlson, 2010). Thus, if we take the reputation measure of physical attractiveness as a criterion measure, the .43 correlation shows that romantic partners are remarkably accurate about their partners' attractiveness, but only if they are asked in the right way (i.e., if they are asked how others would rate their partners).

Discussion

The current findings suggest that romantic partners maintain both biased and realistic views of a core relationship trait: physical attractiveness. Specifically, partners are aware that their own perceptions are discrepant from their partners' and friends' less positive views. In thinking back to Mike and Julie, it may be the case that Mike sees Julie as a 9 out of 10 on attractiveness, but knows that she only sees herself as a 6 and that her friends see her as a 7. Thus, Mike might accurately say to Julie, "You are so beautiful . . . to me."

As Table 1 summarizes, we found at least partial evidence in support of all of our hypotheses, thereby providing support for the notion that when it comes to physical attractiveness, couple members have especially positive and somewhat idiosyncratic perceptions of their partners (H1 and H2), yet they are still realistic: They know that neither their partners (H3) nor their partners' friends (H5) share their rosy views. Moreover, partners have an impressive ability to predict how others outside of the relationship see their partners' physical attractiveness (r = .43), despite the fact that they personally do not particularly agree with those outsiders (r = .13).

The current findings add to the literature by showing that bias, agreement, and realism coexist in a novel way. That is, the coexistence of bias and realism is not merely a byproduct of statistical analyses, and this phenomenon is not limited to different types of judgments (e.g., bias for broad traits and accuracy for specific traits). Romantic partners may consciously hold biased views and realistic views even on the same attribute—physical attractiveness.

⁹ We also ran exploratory analyses examining whether perceived identity and reputation ratings, as well as identity and reputation accuracy, are associated with relationship quality and wellbeing. The results can be accessed in the online supplemental materials.

How Attractive Do People Think Their Romantic Partners Are?

The finding that romantic partners have more positive perceptions than targets is not surprising, as this finding is consistent with the existing literature on positivity in romantic partners' perceptions. However, the finding that romantic partners have more positive perceptions than friends (H1) is noteworthy. Given that romantic partners and friends both see targets in a positive light, romantic partners' especially positive perceptions provide strong evidence that romantic partners are uniquely positively biased in their perceptions of their partners' attractiveness. Since few studies have compared whether romantic partners are more positively biased than different types of close others, this result (specifically regarding physical attractiveness) provides new evidence for the notion that positive illusions are fundamental and unique to romantic relationships.

We also found that people seem to have somewhat idiosyncratic views of their romantic partners; that is, partners' perceptions of attractiveness do not correlate much with others' perceptions (H2). This is especially interesting given that, while other attributes may vary from context to context, physical attractiveness is quite stable across situations and that objective raters typically agree quite a bit about a target's physical attractiveness (Langlois et al., 2000). However, self—other agreement for other traits (e.g., the Big Five) is typically quite high among romantic partners (Kenny, 1994). Thus, the idiosyncrasy of partners' perceptions may be limited to highly evaluative, relationship-relevant traits such as physical attractiveness.

It is possible that gender differences, rather than type of relationship, influenced the differences between friends' and partners' ratings. Specifically, in our samples, target—partner dyads tended to be opposite-sex, whereas target—friend dyads tended to be same-sex, and it is possible that opposite-sex perceivers rate targets as more attractive than same-sex perceivers. Moreover, the highest correlation that emerged, self—friend agreement, was more often comprised of same-sex than opposite-sex raters. On the other hand, consensus among friends was strong even though friends were not necessarily the same sex as one another. Future research should examine whether the sex composition of dyads predicts bias and agreement.

Do Romantic Partners Have Unique Insight Into Their Partners' Self-Views?

Not only did we find that romantic partners know how targets see themselves (H3; identity accuracy), we went further by examining whether identity accuracy is unique to romantic partners (H4). Relative to friends, partners likely have greater motivation to understand targets, as well as greater access to targets' self-disclosures, and should therefore have unique insight into how targets see themselves. Our results showed that romantic partners achieve (correlational) identity accuracy, whereas friends do not achieve identity accuracy (above and beyond their baseline level of self-other agreement). When compared head-to-head in multiple regression, romantic partners' perceived identity ratings are more predictive of targets' self-perceptions than are friends' perceived identity ratings. Given that the partners in the current study knew targets for less time than did the friends, these findings are con-

sistent with previous work showing that accuracy does not necessarily increase with greater acquaintance (Kenny, 2004). Instead, differences in identity accuracy may be explained by the greater degree of intimacy shared between romantic partners compared to friends.

The identity accuracy effect for romantic partners is especially impressive given that partners have particularly strong biases and somewhat idiosyncratic views of targets' attractiveness, which could make it especially difficult to see beyond their own perspectives. On the other hand, the greater similarity between friends' and targets' perceptions (compared to partners' and targets' perceptions) might have made distinguishing between their own and targets' self-views more difficult for friends.

Do Romantic Partners Know How Outsiders of the Relationship See Their Partners' Attractiveness?

While it may be easy for romantic partners to acknowledge that their own perceptions of their partners' attractiveness differ from their partners' self-views (given that self-views may very well be wrong), it is quite surprising that partners are able to acknowledge that their perceptions differ from their partners' reputations (H5), which are harder to dismiss as wrong. To acknowledge this and retain one's own biased views of one's partner probably requires a great deal of rationalization and perceptual gymnastics, particularly for a trait like physical attractiveness, which is arguably defined by a person's reputation. Perhaps it is adaptive for people to think that others perceive their partners as less attractive than they do to reduce jealousy. We do not know whether romantic partners who acknowledge that others do not share their perceptions of their partners' attractiveness are admitting they are biased, or whether they have convinced themselves that the consensus among others about their partners' physical attractiveness is somehow inaccurate. We do know, however, that partners are conscious of the discrepancy they reported between their own perceptions and others', given that they made these ratings side by side. Thus, at least when directly asked to do so, partners are able to separate their own views from others' views of their partners' attractiveness. Future research should examine whether people are typically consciously aware of such discrepancies or only think about them when they are prompted to do so, as well as the extent to which such insight is adaptive.

A New Kind of Partner Knowledge

Knowing another person well may require more than having an accurate impression of her; rather, it may involve being able to see her from multiple perspectives. Specifically, there may be three components necessary to really knowing someone: (a) knowing the target's identity, (b) knowing the target's reputation, and (c) knowing what the target actually is like. Of these three components, the results of the current study suggest that when it comes to knowledge of physical attractiveness, romantic partners (a) have identity accuracy and (b) have reputation accuracy. Testing whether partners know the targets' actual levels of attractiveness (c), however, brings up the thorny "criterion" problem: how to operationalize reality. Identity and reputation accuracy are useful constructs for the very reason that they circumvent this criterion problem because both identity and reputation have clear criteria

(i.e., targets' self-views and targets' friends' views, respectively). It may be that measuring the absolute accuracy of romantic partners' views, at least on physical attractiveness, is an intractable problem. However, reputation is a plausible accuracy criterion, given that physical attractiveness is a reputational trait (unlike, e.g., anxiety, which is defined more by subjective experience). In any case, we propose that identity and reputation accuracy are two clear ways to test partner-knowledge. We believe that our results imply a sophisticated level of knowledge among relationship partners, operating to fulfill motives driven by both esteem- and epistemic-related needs. However, it remains to be seen whether partners would agree to label their own views as biased.

Limitations and Future Directions

While this study identified novel phenomena, the findings are based only on perceptions of physical attractiveness. We suspect maintaining realism through knowledge of identity and reputation is important primarily when perceiving socially desirable and relationship-relevant traits (i.e., when people are motivated to see their partners in especially biased ways). When perceiving more neutral or relationship-irrelevant traits, identity and reputation accuracy may not be necessary, because partners' own perceptions are likely relatively accurate. Future research should examine romantic partners' knowledge of identity and reputation for a diverse range of characteristics to test whether the phenomena illustrated in the current study also obtain for characteristics other than physical attractiveness.

Another limitation of the current study is that most targets were in relatively short-term relationships, and as such, we cannot assume that our results generalize across all romantic relationships. For instance, Swann et al. (1994) found that people want favorable evaluations from their dating partners but self-verifying evaluations from their spouses; perhaps strategies for maintaining satisfying relationships rely on different perceptual processes, and varying levels of bias and realism, in married couples.

Understanding what people know about their partners on a range of characteristics may have important implications for relationship outcomes. For instance, in line with Swann's (1983) selfverification theory, people probably feel better understood when their partners know their self-views. Thus, achieving identity accuracy on a variety of traits may help partners feel validated even when couple members personally disagree about one another's attributes (a phenomenon we like to call "self-verification lite"). Also, given the great extent to which friends and family influence relationships, it is possible that when people know how others see their partners, they may be more susceptible to identifying red flags, or the opposite, seeing something good about their partners that they did not recognize on their own. In this case, achieving reputation accuracy on a variety of traits may help partners know more about each other. Whether it is understanding or noticing new characteristics based on others' perspectives, knowledge of identity and reputation may impact experiences, expectations, and satisfaction in relationships. Future research should examine whether identity and reputation accuracy predict relationship suc-

Finally, further research on partner-knowledge should continue including friends' perceptions, as they provide a benchmark for drawing conclusions about bias, realism, and the uniqueness of romantic partners' perceptions. For instance with respect to self-other agreement, it is not clear whether instances of self-partner agreement, frequently interpreted by researchers as evidence of accuracy, are merely *folie* à *deux* (delusions transmitted and shared within a pair), or whether they are a sign that partners' perceptions are realistic and likely to be shared by others outside the relationship. Comparing self- and partner-ratings to friends' ratings would shed light on this question. Furthermore, comparing judgments from partners to judgments from friends would help us understand what aspects of the person perception process are unique to romantic relationships and what aspects also exist in other close relationships. By understanding what makes romantic relationships—and the perceptions among relationship partners—unique, we can better understand the processes that lead to accuracy and bias in interpersonal perceptions.

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