# Effects of Prototypicality on Evaluations of Warmth of Attractive Group Members

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## Background

- Attractive individuals tend to be perceived more positively than unattractive individuals [1]

- However, there has been little research that ties personal characteristics to group membership.

- People derive their sense of identity from the groups to which they belong [2]

- Joining a group can enhance a positive source of identity

- People also join groups in an effort to reduce uncertainty [3]

- Group membership allows people to reduce self-uncertainty through the processes of social categorization and reference to the group prototype [3,4, 5, 6, 7]

- Prototypical members (those who fit well within the group) tend to assess fellow group members with respect to prototype fit (Hogg, 2001)

- Peripheral members may focus more on individual qualities (i.e., attractiveness) than central group attributes to evaluate other members

- The current work investigates how group member status (prototypical or peripheral) may affect assessments of other group members

## Hypotheses

**Hypotheses:** We hypothesized that participants who were made to feel less prototypical (peripheral) would use more descriptive information (e.g. ratings of attractiveness) to evaluate prototypicality of other group members, rather than prototypical participants.

- Peripheral participants will rate attractive group members higher in warmth than unattractive group members

- Prototypical group members ratings of warmth between unattractive and attractive group members will not be significantly different

## Methods

*Participants*
Two hundred and forty seven female participants ($M_{age}$ = 39.58, $SD$ = 11.903; 73.7% white) were recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk Prime

*Procedure*
- Participants completed a bogus personality survey designed to make them feel prototypical or peripheral
- Following a short online group interaction, participants rated perceptions of warmth for attractive/unattractive group members
- Participants completed demographics measures and were thanked and compensated for their time

*Measures*
**Warmth.** Participants rated their agreement to four statements such as, *how good natured is the group member?*, on 7-point scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*), to 7 (*strongly agree*), (α =.93) [8]

## Results

- An ANOVA analysis found a main effect of status on target warmth, $F(1, 239) = 5.63$, $p = .018$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$; as well as a significant interaction between target attractiveness and participant prototypicality for target warmth, $F(1, 239) = 3.91$, $p = .049$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$
- Participants in the peripheral condition rated the attractive target ($M = 5.06$, $SD = 1.11$) higher in warmth than the unattractive target ($M = 4.51$, $SD = 0.89$), $F(1, 243) = 9.35$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$ (Figure 1)
- There was no difference in ratings of target warmth for attractive targets ($M = 4.99$, $SD = 0.95$) and unattractive targets ($M = 4.95$, $SD = 0.95$) in the prototypical condition, $F(1, 243) = 0.06$, $p = .81$, $\eta p^2 = .00$

**Figure 1.** Ratings of Warmth
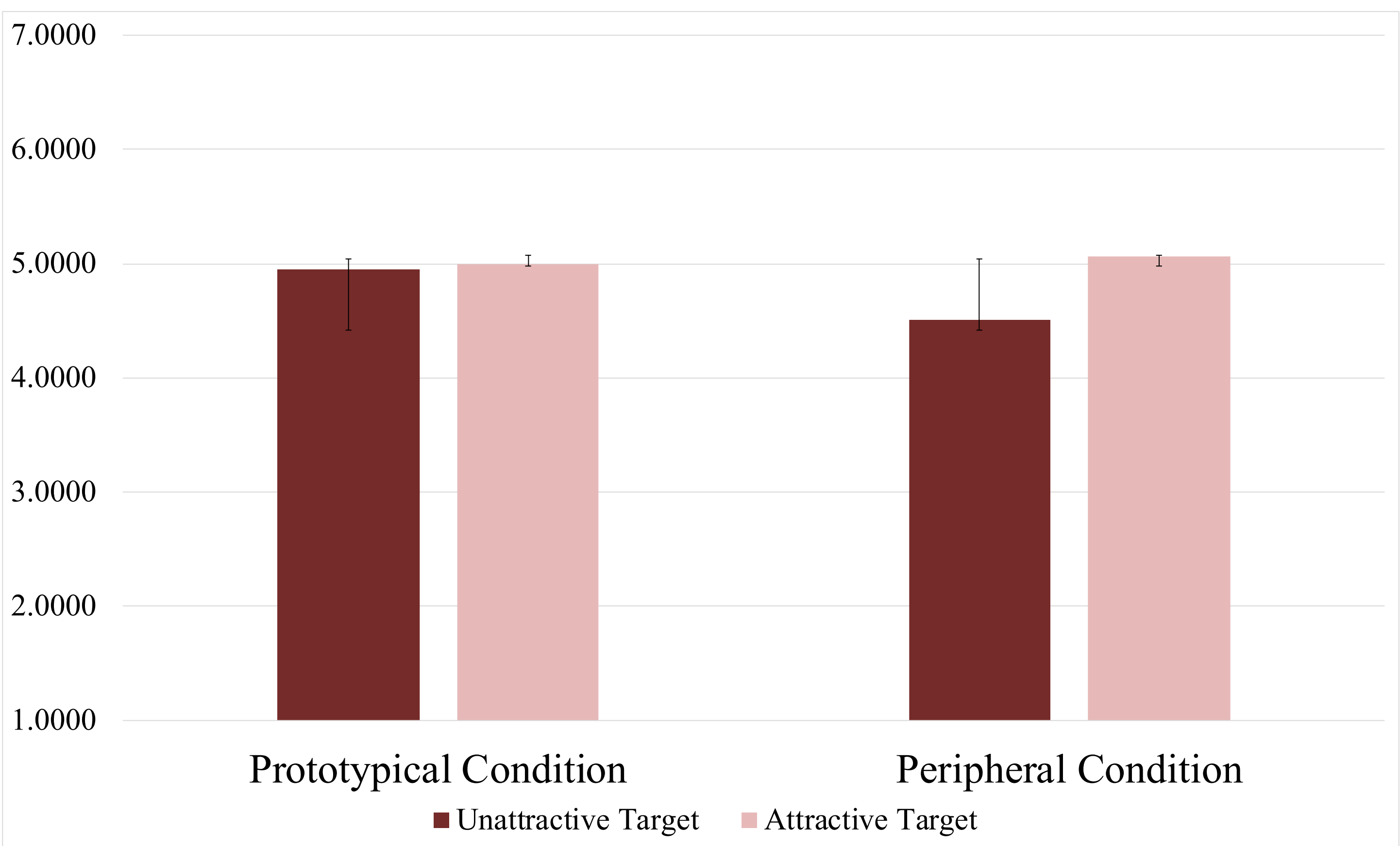


## Discussion

- Results suggest that people who feel peripheral tend to base quick judgements of other group members on physical attributes, whereas prototypical group members may focus on group central attributes to form judgements

- Someone who feels peripheral may desire to feel warmly towards a high status (attractive) group member in the hopes of understanding the group prototype and to increase personal status within the group

- The present work has implications for how our group status may affect who we promote within the group, who we turn to for information, and potentially, shifts in the group prototype

- Because physical appearance is often one of the first things noticed of other people, future research should explore other physical attributes that may affect reception of an individual by prototypical and peripheral group members

- Future research should also address limitations in terms of gender

- Future work may explore characteristic domains other than warmth, such as competence, leadership, or trustworthiness

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