

# The influence of attachment style with father on young women's preference of masculine/feminine characteristics of male face

www.evolutionpsychology.com  
www.meskonorbort.hu  
meskonorbort@meskonorbort.hu

Norbert Meskó  
University of Pécs

European Human Behaviour and Evolution  
Association Conference  
25-27 March 2010 Wrocław POLAND

## Introduction

According to Belsky's model (1997) individuals have been selected to adjust life histories in response to environmental conditions, and variations in the life cycle are considered as adaptive answers to different circumstances. Individuals who develop insecure attachment with parents and who face scarce resources and family stress will reduce the age of biological maturation, accelerate sexual maturation. In environments where relative stable, predictable resources prevail, individuals tend to have a set of life-history traits (delayed maturation, low fertility, enduring pair-bonding) that are critical to rearing competitive and successful offspring. The availability of resources, the stability of pair-bonds, and trustworthiness of caregiver during early childhood will affect how developing individuals shape their mating and parental effort. Individuals who develop insecure attachment with their parents and experience temporary relationships between family members, and who face scarce resources and family stress, will reduce the age of biological maturation, accelerate sexual maturation, and lead them to short-term pairbonds. The other group, who have more stable relationships with family members and fewer conflicts with them, will show more stable pair-bonds (Berezkei and Csanaky 2001).

## Hypotheses

It may be hypothesized (on the basis of Belsky-model), that the quality of early attachment style with parents has influence on young women's preference of masculine/feminine characteristics of male face.

**Prediction 1.** Females scoring high on a sociosexuality index are more likely to prefer masculinised male faces, and the others, who has lower sociosexuality scores are more likely to prefer feminised male faces.

**Prediction 2.** Females scoring high on a sociosexuality index show higher level of parental rejection on a retrospective attachment inventory compared to females whose sociosexuality index is lower.

**Prediction 3.** Females scoring higher on self perceived attractiveness has higher sociosexuality scores, than females whose self perceived attractiveness ratings are lower.

## Methods

**Stimuli.** We made six pair (masculinized/feminised) computer generated male faces from 49 individual male face, using *perceived masculinity method* (DeBruine et al. 2006). **Figure 1.**

**Subjects.** 110 female subjects were recruited from the university's undergraduate population. Their mean age was 20.34 with a range between 18.58 and 23.83. They were asked to rank the portraits on 7 different scale (masculinity, attractiveness, dominance, aggression, maturity, preference for short term bonding, preference for long term bonding).

**EMBU and SOI.** Female respondents were asked to complete short version of the EMBU questionnaire. This instrument shows the retrospective perception of parental relating on three different scales in connection with both parents (Arindell et al. 1999). They were also asked to complete Sociosexual Orientation Inventory (SOI) (Simpson and Gangestad 1992) and rank their own attractiveness ratings on a 7 point scale.

## Results

**EMBU and SOI.** Those young adult women whose parental rejection scores are higher on EMBU test (with both parents) has higher sociosexuality value on SOI, than those who has lower parental rejection scores (Parental:  $19.29 \pm 5.72$  vs.  $16.8 \pm 5.1$ ,  $t = -2.321$ ,  $p < .05$ ; Maternal:  $19.4 \pm 5.91$  vs.  $16.61 \pm 4.69$ ,  $t = -2.658$ ,  $p < .01$ ). **Own attractiveness ratings and SOI.** We found mild but significant correlation between sociosexuality and own perceived attractiveness ( $r = .21$ ,  $p < .05$ ). According to results, those who perceive themselves as more attractive are more likely to choose short term commitments, than whose beauty ratings are lower. **Face perception and SOI.** We found negative correlation between attractiveness ratings of feminised male faces and SOI scores ( $r = -0.26$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Those who has lower scores on SOI are more likely to find attractive a feminised male face, than those whose SOI scores are higher ( $3.3 \pm 1.02$  vs.  $2.88 \pm .88$ ,  $t = 2.77$ ,  $p < .01$ )



Figure 1. Samples from the stimulus material. Left face is feminised, right face is masculinised. (see the text for details)

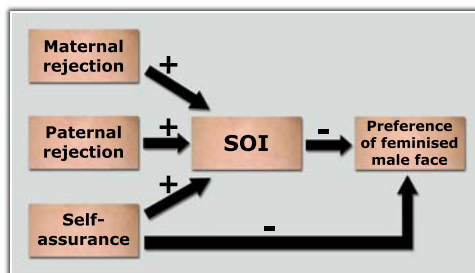


Figure 2. The possible link between parental rejection, self-assurance and preference of feminised male face. According this model SOI might moderate between early childhood experiences and present face preference.

## Discussion

We found indirect evidence for the effect of early childhood experience on the face preference. (A) The parental attachment style has an effect on the respondents' sociosexuality, (B) but self perceived attractiveness (a kind of self-assurance) has also an influence on the measure of sociosexuality of the subjects, and females scoring low on a sociosexuality index are more likely to prefer feminised male faces, what is similar to an earlier result of Waynforth et al. (2005). (C) Sociosexuality has an effect on the face perception. Based on this result we can draw a picture, where the parental rejection as an external factor and self perceived beauty (self-assurance) as internal agent also has an effect on sociosexual orientation. Sociosexuality is an indirect agent between early childhood experiences and self-perceived attractiveness together

with face preference (Figure 2). Females who grew up in an unfavourable family environment and those who have higher self-assurance (and rating themselves more attractive than the average) are more likely to engage themselves in short term pair-bonding. Females with higher level of self-assurance are less likely to prefer feminised male face than those who score lower on self perceived beauty scale.

## References

- Arindell, W.A., Sanavio, E., Aguilar, G., Sica, C., Hatzichristou, C., Eismann, M., Recinos, L.A., Gaszner, P., Peter, M., Battagliese, G., Kállai, J., and van der Ende, J. (1999) The development of a short form of the EMBU: Its appraisal with students in Greece, Guatemala, Hungary and Italy. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 27:613-628.
- Belsky, J. (1997) Attachment, Mating and Parenting: an Evolutionary Interpretation. *Human Nature*, 8, 361-381.
- Belsky, J., Steinberg, L., & Draper, P. (1991). Childhood Experience, Interpersonal Development and Reproductive Strategy: An Evolutionary Theory of Socialization. *Child Development*, 62, 647-670.
- Berezkei, T. and Csanaky, A. (2001) Stressful family environment, mortality, and child socialisation: Life-history strategies among adolescents and adults from unfavourable social circumstances. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 25: 501-508.
- DeBruine, L. M., Jones, B. C., Little, A. C., Boothroyd, L. G., Perrett, D. I., Penton-Voak, I. S., Cooper, P. A., Penke, L., Feinberg, D. R. and Tiddeman, B. P. (2006) Correlated preferences for facial masculinity and ideal or actual partner's masculinity. *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London B*, 273: 1355-1360.
- Simpson, J., and Gangestad, S. (1992) Sociosexuality and romantic partner choice. *Journal of Personality*, 60:31-51.
- Waynforth, D., Delwadia, S., & Camm, M. (2005). The influence of women's mating strategies on preference for masculine facial architecture. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 26, 409-416.