Do Impressions of Health, Dominance, and Warmth Explain Why Masculine Faces Are Preferred More in a Short-Term Mate?

* Men high in facial masculinity are preferred more as a short-term partner (STP) than a long-term partner (LTP). We used a representative sample of natural faces to examine whether the greater preference for masculine-looking men as a STP could be explained by the fact that they look healthier, more dominant, or lower in warmth. None of these attributes explained the greater preference for facial masculinity in a STP. Rather, masculinity mediated the greater preference for healthy and dominant looking men as a STP. Women also preferred men who appeared high in warmth as a LTP than a STP, an effect independent of facial masculinity, but mediated by facial expressions. Our results suggest that women do not prefer masculine-looking men more as a STP than a LTP simply because they look healthier, more dominant, or less warm.
* Research has demonstrated that increasing the masculinity of composite faces also increases impressions of apparent health (Johnston et al, 2001; Scarbrough & Johnston, 2005)
* Research has found that women show the greatest preference for apparent health during the low-fertility phase of the menstrual cycle when progesterone levels are highest (Jones et al, 2005a; Jones et al, 2005b) which is opposite for what has been found with preferences for facial masculinity (Johnston et al, 2001; Scarbrough & Johnston, 2005)
* Dominance and facial masculinity are positively correlated, and increasing the masculinity of a face also increases perception of dominance (DeBruine et al, 2006; Swaddle & Reierson, 2002)