The Faces of leaders: Sexual Dimorphism, perceived traits, and voting in context

* Raters preferred the plus-Bush face as a war-time leader and the plus-Kerry face as a peace-time leader.
* Masculine faces were voted for more in war-time and feminine faces in peace-time context suggesting that attitudes to sexual dimorphism in faces play an important role in voting decisions
* Both findings demonstrate that voter’s attitudes to the physical appearance of politicians may interact with their perceptions of the current political climate to determine voting behaviour. Such flexible leadership choice may reflect the selection of leaders who are most beneficial to the individuals of a group at a particular time or in a particular situation
* Attractive individuals are more likely to receive votes than unattractive individuals (Budesheim & Depaola 1994)
* Facial masculinity, linked to facial dominance (Perrett t al, 1998), positively relates to testosterone level (Penton-Voak & Chen 2004), suggesting a link to actual dominant behaviour (Mazur & Booth 1998) in dominant faced individuals.
* In fact masculine faces, as well as looking dominant, also appear untrustworthy (Perrett et al, 1998).
* Different aspects valued in leader – dominance for Bush and likeability/intelligence for Kerry
* Masculine face was voted for more in the war-time context and the feminine face was voted for more in the peace-time context.
* The results show that judges have conditional values for the faces of leaders which vary with current circumstances