

Scientists find facial scars increase attractiveness

November 18 2008

Men with facial scars are more attractive to women seeking short-term relationships, scientists at the University of Liverpool have found.

It was previously assumed that in Western cultures scarring was an unattractive facial feature and in non-Western cultures they were perceived as a sign of maturity and strength. Scientists at Liverpool and Stirling University, however, have found that Western women find scarring on men attractive and may associate it with health and bravery.

Researchers investigated how scarring might impact on mate choice for men and women seeking both long-term and short-term relationships. They found that women preferred men with facial scars for short-term relationships and equally preferred scarred and un-scarred faces for long-term relationships. Men, however, regarded women with and without facial scars as equally attractive for both types of relationship.

Dr Rob Burriss, from the University's School of Biological Sciences, explains: "Male and female participants were shown images of faces that displayed scarring from injury or illness, and were asked to rate how attractive they found the person for long-term and short-term relationships.

"Women may have rated scarring as an attractive quality for short-term relationships because they found it be a symbol of masculinity, a feature that is linked to high testosterone levels and an indicator of good genetic qualities that can be passed on to offspring. Men without scars, however,

could be seen as more caring and therefore more suitable for long-term relationships.

"The results demonstrate that we may have more in common with non-Western cultures than previously thought. The perception that scarring is a sign of strength is a view shared by the Yanomamö tribe of Venezuela for example, who use face-paint to accentuate scars that result from ritualised club fights designed to test a man's endurance against repeated strikes to the head.

"The assumption that scarring is a sign of bravery is also consistent with the historical tradition of academic fencing in Western culture, whereby scarring on a man was often evidence of his courage and ability to withstand an opponent's blow."

Source: University of Liverpool

Citation: Scientists find facial scars increase attractiveness (2008, November 18) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2008-11-scientists-facial-scars.html>

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