

Deep Voices Scare Adolescent Girls but Turn on Teens

September 16 2009, by Lin Edwards

(PhysOrg.com) -- New research from The University of St. Andrews in Scotland has discovered that teenage girls are attracted by deep male voices, while younger girls feel intimidated by them.

The study, to be published in the journal *Evolution and Human Behaviour* was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and aimed to find out how the ideas of attractiveness change during adolescence and the early teenage years, which is a crucial period in development. This knowledge could help to guide young people as they begin to experience their first romances.

The researchers took pictures of males and changed them digitally to emphasize or minimize their [masculinity](#). They also manipulated male voices to make them higher or lower in pitch. They played the same [voice](#) to each subject twice, with the pitch digitally altered. The pictures and voices were presented to young [girls](#) aged 11 to 15, who were asked to assess the attractiveness or otherwise of the males.

The study, led by Tamsin Saxton, tested 300 girls and found that the younger girls found low-pitched voices scary and associated them with villainous characters, while for the older girls deep-voiced [boys](#) were more attractive. One young girl described a low-pitched voice as reminding her of Darth Vader, but as girls grow older the charm of the deep voice grows.

Saxton said the perceptions of what is considered attractive changes

during the teenage years, which is a time when the physical changes can be dramatic. Boys' voices break and deepen, and their faces develop "masculine" characteristics, and so teenage girls may be responding to the changes occurring in their peers, and responding to boys who are more mature sexually. Previous studies have shown that women also find deep male voices more [attractive](#).

The study also tested the perception of attractiveness of the faces, and found that younger and older girls, even those preferring a low-pitched voice, still preferred boys with more feminine faces. Adolescent and teenage boys were also tested, and Saxton found that older boys preferred more masculine faces than younger boys.

Dr Saxton, a University of St Andrews postdoctoral research fellow, will publish her findings in the interdisciplinary journal *Evolution and Human Behaviour*.

If you have a moment to spare, how about taking part in an [online psychology experiments](#)?

More information: Saxton, T. K., DeBruine, L. M., Jones, B. C., Little, A. C. & Roberts, S. C. Face and voice attractiveness judgments change during adolescence. *Evolution and Human Behavior*. [doi: 10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2009.06.004](#) ([PDF](#))

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Citation: Deep Voices Scare Adolescent Girls but Turn on Teens (2009, September 16) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2009-09-deep-voices-adolescent-girls-teens.html>

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