

Study examines men's priorities when looking for mates

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Men who are looking for short-term companionship are more interested in a woman's body than those looking for a long-term relationship, who focused on a woman's face, according to new research from psychologists at The University of Texas at Austin.

A woman's [body](#) generally provides cues about her state of fertility while her face gives insight into her long-term reproductive value, according to previous research. So the new findings suggest men seeking a short-term relationship have psychological adaptations to look for partners who are fertile and can produce offspring.

"Men's priorities shift depending on what they want in a mate, with facial features taking on more importance when a long-term relationship is the goal," says psychology graduate student Jaime Confer, who co-authored the research with graduate student Carin Perilloux and Professor David Buss. "Mating is central to the engine of [natural selection](#). This research helps clarify people's preference."

Women showed no significant difference in their interest in [faces](#) or bodies when looking for short-term or long-term mates, according to the study published this month in the journal [Evolution and Human Behavior](#).

Previous research has examined the qualities that make faces and bodies attractive, such as symmetry and waist-to-hip ratio. But this is the first study to experimentally analyze the relative importance of faces and

bodies as whole components.

As part of the study, 375 college students were shown an image of another person, whose face and body was hidden, who was described as either a potential short-term or long-term mate. The participants had the option of looking at either head or body, but not both.

Twenty-five percent of men who were told to consider the mate as a long-term partner looked at their potential partner's body. In contrast, 51 percent of those who were told to consider her as a short-term partner chose to look her body.

Confer and her colleagues are considering follow-up research in which participants will be asked if they want to see the faces or bodies of potential rivals who may be stealing their mates. That could help reveal if [men](#) and women feel more threatened by a pretty face or a good body.

Provided by University of Texas at Austin

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