

Looking healthy is more attractive than manliness

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(Medical Xpress) -- Having a healthy skin colour is more important in determining how attractive a man is to women than how manly they look. These are the findings of a study carried out by researchers in the School of Psychology at the University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus.

Researchers in the [Face Perception](#) Group took photographs of 34 Caucasian and 41 black [African men](#)'s faces in carefully controlled conditions and measured the [skin colour](#) of the faces. The team found that in both the African and Caucasian populations the attractiveness ratings given by the women was closely related to the amount of "golden" colour in the skin. Their findings have been published in the journal [Evolution and Human Behaviour](#).

The research, led by Dr Ian Stephen, used a new computer technique called Geometric Morphometric Methods to measure mathematically how masculine the faces are. He said: "We used this technique to mathematically compare the shape of the men's faces to a similar sample of women's faces from the same populations."

Click here for full story This technique gave each face a mathematically-determined masculinity score – an independent measure of how typically male they are. Thirty African and 32 [Caucasian](#) women then rated how attractive each of the men in the photographs looked.

Research driven by evolutionary theory

When we find a member of the opposite sex attractive, that is our brains telling us they are an appropriate mate. In evolutionary terms people who can identify healthy fertile mates will be more successful at leaving offspring.

Dr Stephen said: “The attractive colour in our face is affected by our health – especially by the amount of colourful antioxidant carotenoid pigments we get from fruit and vegetables in our diet. These carotenoids are also thought to be good for our immune and reproductive systems, making us healthy and increasing our fertility. The masculinity of the face had no effect on the attractiveness of the face.”

Eat more fruit and veg to look attractive

Dr Stephen said: “Our study shows that being healthy may be the best way for men to look [attractive](#). We know that you can achieve a more healthy looking skin colour by eating more fruit and vegetables, so that would be a good start.”

Women may need to be familiar with a particular population before they can detect these colour cues. While the golden colour was very important when women were rating [faces](#) of their own ethnic group, women don't seem to care about skin colour in other-ethnicity men. This might be because the skin colour of other groups is so unfamiliar that the [women](#) cannot detect these relatively subtle colour differences.

The research was carried out in collaboration with with Dr Ian Penton-Voak and Dr Isabel Scott at Bristol University and Dr Nicholas Pound at Brunel University London.

Provided by University of Nottingham

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