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Why girls who mature early go for masculine men

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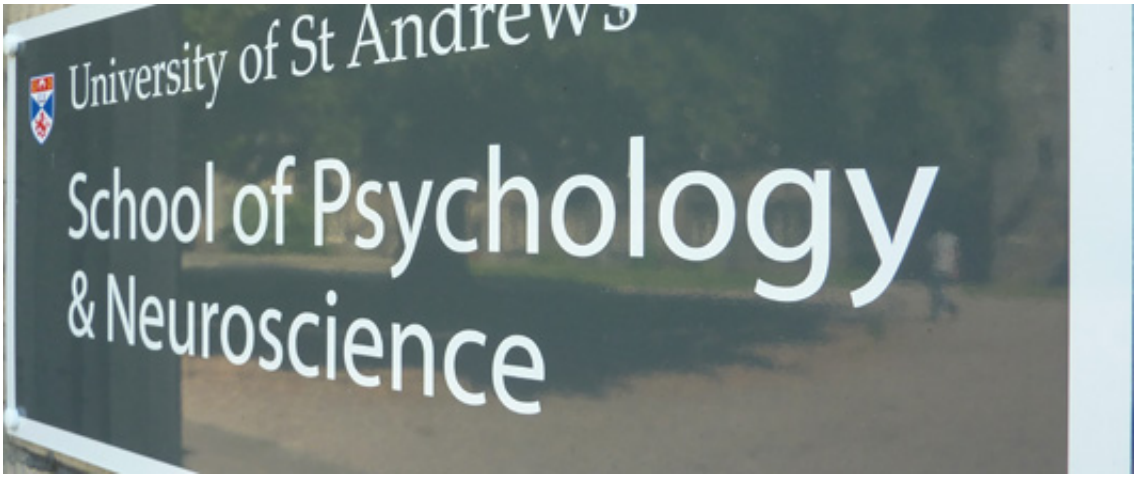

Women who undergo early puberty prefer more masculine men and are more likely to want to have children earlier, according to new research.

The study, by scientists at the University of St Andrews, shows that even after many years, the age of a woman's first period affects her partner preferences and reproductive plans later in life.

The research, published by the journal *Evolutionary Psychology*, sheds light on the influences of early puberty.

The study was carried out by Dr Carlota Batres and Professor David

Perrett of the Perception Lab at the University's School of Psychology & Neuroscience.

The researchers used computer graphic manipulations to make subtle alterations to images of men's faces to make them more or less masculine. Women aged 18-30 were then asked to choose which face they considered to be the most attractive. Those who had reported starting puberty earlier in life (for example, 10 years or younger) chose the more masculine faces as more attractive.

More specifically, women who reported their first period at age 11 were the most likely to prefer masculine faces. Carlota Batres, who led the research, said: "Our findings suggest that there is something special about undergoing puberty at age 11. At this age, most girls in the UK transition from primary school, where they are surrounded by younger boys, to secondary school, where they are surrounded by older boys. Thus, these girls are exposed to older boys during sexual maturation. From our results, it appears that, in the UK, age 11 is a critical period during development that has long-lasting influences on partner preferences."

The study also found that those who experienced early puberty reported a desire to have children earlier in life.

Professor David Perrett, Head of the Perception Lab at the University of St Andrews added: "Speed is also a factor in reproductive strategies. For instance, individuals who choose to have children can exercise a 'fast and early' or a 'slow and late' reproductive strategy. From our findings, it appears that women who undergo puberty earlier exercise a 'fast and early' reproductive strategy."

More information: C. Batres et al. Early Menarche is Associated With Preference for Masculine Male Faces and Younger Preferred Age to

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Have a First Child, *Evolutionary Psychology* (2016). DOI: 10.1177/1474704916637876

Provided by University of St Andrews

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