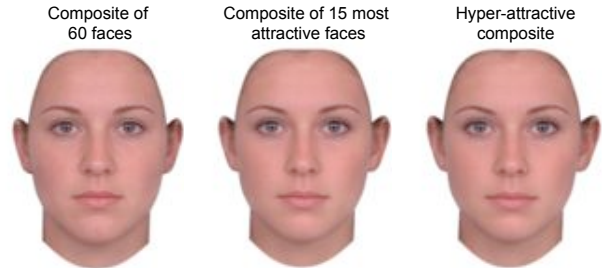


Topic 4.

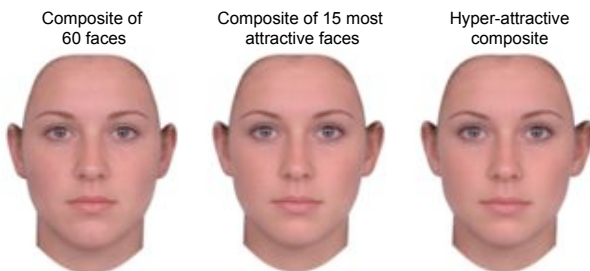
Attractiveness and masculinity-femininity

Exaggerated characteristics are attractive



Perrett et al. (1994) found that averageness was not the most important determinant of attractive faces but that highly attractive faces had exaggerated characteristics (see Topic 3)

What exaggerated traits are attractive?



Although Perrett et al. (1994) showed that highly attractive faces have exaggerated (rather than average) characteristics, Perrett et al. (1994) did not identify what exaggerated characteristics are attractive

Exaggerated characteristics and attractiveness in non-humans



In many non-human species, exaggerated sex-typical characteristics are preferred. For example, male swallows and peacocks with exaggerated masculine characteristics are preferred

Exaggerated characteristics and attractiveness in non-humans



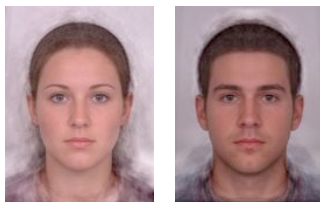
Biologists have proposed that exaggerated sex-typical characteristics are preferred in non-humans because individuals with exaggerated sex-typical characteristics are particularly healthy & will have the healthiest offspring

Exaggerated sex-typicality and facial attractiveness



Because exaggerated sex-typical characteristics are preferred in non-humans, Perrett et al. (1998) tested if exaggerated sex-typical characteristics are preferred in human faces

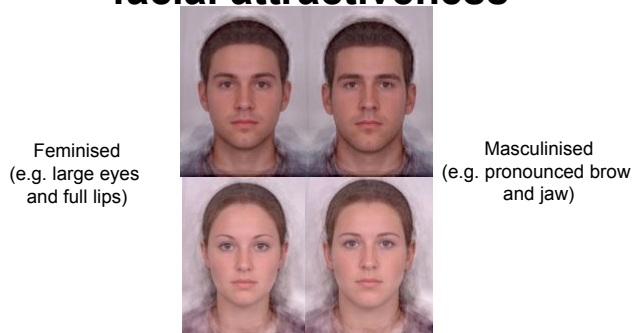
Exaggerated sex-typicality and facial attractiveness



Perrett et al. (1998) used computer graphic methods to exaggerate masculine or feminine characteristics in faces

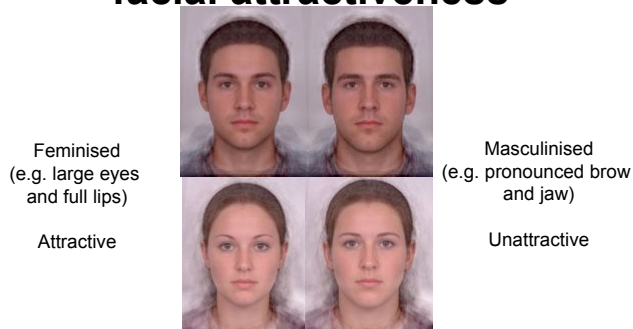
Composite male and female faces were used to define a male-female continuum that was used to transform male and female faces in masculinity-femininity of shape

Exaggerated sex-typicality and facial attractiveness



Perrett et al. (1998) showed participants masculinised and feminised male and female faces and asked participants to choose which version was more attractive

Exaggerated sex-typicality and facial attractiveness



Perrett et al. (1998) found that men and women preferred feminised versions of male and female faces

Why aren't masculine male faces generally preferred?

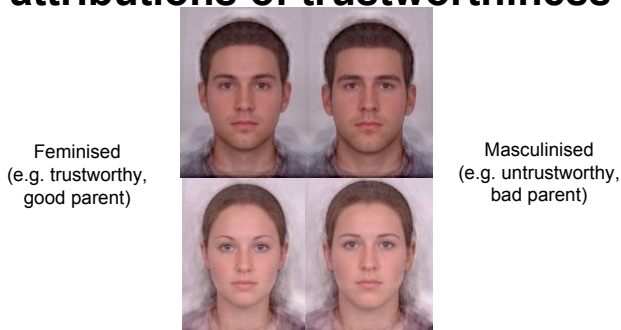
Unlike non-human species, humans form stable pair bonds where both males and females take responsibility for raising children

Masculine men may be less willing to invest time and resources in partners and offspring than feminine men are

Perrett et al. (1998) therefore investigated if people are more likely to ascribe negative personality characteristics to feminine faces than masculine faces

Feminine faces may be preferred partly because feminine faces may be ascribed more positive characteristics than masculine faces

Exaggerated sex-typicality and attributions of trustworthiness



Perrett et al. (1998) found that feminised versions of male and female faces were perceived as looking more trustworthy and as better parents than masculine faces

Menstrual cycle phase and face preferences

Although Perrett et al. (1998) found that people generally prefer feminine faces, the strength of women's preferences for masculine male faces were highly variable.

Feminine male faces may be preferred generally by women because they are perceived as being good long-term partners

Masculine men, however, are thought to have healthier children than feminine men

In light of this, Penton-Voak et al. (1999) tested if women were more attracted to masculine men at points of the menstrual cycle where fertility is highest (i.e. around ovulation)

Menstrual cycle phase and face preferences



Penton-Voak et al. (1999) tested if the strength of women's preferences for masculinity change during their menstrual cycle

Menstrual cycle phase and face preferences



Penton-Voak et al. (1999) found that women generally prefer feminine male faces

Menstrual cycle phase and face preferences



But are more attracted to masculine men around ovulation (when they are most fertile)

Key points from Topic 4

Exaggerated feminine characteristics in male and female faces are more attractive than masculine characteristics because they are ascribed positive personality characteristics

Women have stronger preferences for masculine male faces during times when fertility is high (i.e. around ovulation) than at other times