



## Short Communication

## Unrestricted sociosexuality predicts preferences for extraverted male faces



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## ABSTRACT

Human facial structures communicate health, thus indicating one's suitability as a potential mating partner. However, facial structures also communicate information about one's personality, which allows for inferences about a target's behavioral intentions. A target's relative level of extraversion can be reliably inferred from facial structural features. Because past research has found an association between extraversion and greater interest in short-term mating, particularly for men, we hypothesized that women with an unrestricted sociosexual orientation, which is geared toward short-term mating, would demonstrate heightened preferences for extraverted faces, particularly male faces. Participants viewed face pairs of various individuals manipulated to be highly extraverted versus highly introverted while indicating their preferences among the pairs; participants also completed the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory-Revised. Independent of sociosexuality, participants preferred extraversion (relative to introversion) in female faces; conversely, participants demonstrated a stronger preference for introverted male faces. However, more sociosexually unrestricted women and men exhibited a greater preference for extraverted male faces. Whereas unrestricted women's preferences may be related to identifying mating opportunities, men's preferences for extraverted male faces may reflect an enhanced sensitivity to detecting same-sex individuals who would represent a heightened intrasexually competitive threat.

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## 1. Introduction

Although some individuals prefer long-term, monogamous relationships, others desire more pluralistic mating strategies involving multiple short-term partners. These interests constitute the individual difference of sociosexual orientation, or sociosexuality (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991). Those preferring long-term mating have a *restricted* sociosexuality whereas those interested in short-term mating would be considered *unrestricted*. Sociosexuality appears to influence social perception by facilitating unrestricted individuals in identifying high-quality short-term mating opportunities (Sacco, Hugenberg, & Sefcek, 2009). When selecting short-term mates, individuals prioritize good genes and emphasize physical attractiveness (Li & Kenrick, 2006). As such, individuals dispositionally motivated for short-term sexual encounters value physical attractiveness more in potential mates to facilitate selecting mates with better genes for offspring production. Sociosexually unrestricted individuals possess considerable sensitivity toward facial traits communicating fitness, including symmetry (e.g., Quist et al., 2012; Sacco et al., 2009) and sexual dimorphism (Sacco,

Jones, DeBruine, & Hugenberg, 2012), which aids in identifying optimum sexual partners.

Along with identifying good genes, sociosexually unrestricted persons might also benefit by identifying the extent of potential mates' receptivity to short-term mating. Indeed, past research indicates sexually unrestricted persons are better at discriminating Duchenne smiles, signs of affiliative interest, from non-Duchenne smiles, which may mask underlying negative affect (Sacco et al., 2009). Nonetheless, if facial cues beyond affect were potentially reliable signals of affiliation or short-term mating interest, it would prove fruitful for unrestricted persons to be more sensitive to, and prefer, faces possessing these features. Importantly, humans demonstrate considerable accuracy in inferring personality based on facial structures, most notably accurately inferring relative levels of extraversion from facial structural information alone (Borkenau, Brecke, Möttig, & Paelecke, 2009; Little & Perrett, 2007). Additionally, past research finds higher levels of extraversion are associated with greater short-term mating interest (Schmitt & Shackelford, 2008). Similar to unrestricted individuals' heightened preferences for fitness indicators, we hypothesize that more unrestricted sociosexuality should predict stronger preferences for faces whose structure indicates greater extraversion. Given extraversion's correlation with short-term mating interest, it would behoove unrestricted persons to prefer those whose faces communicate extraversion. The current research extends

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findings implicating sociosexuality in detecting facial cues by testing its relation to perceiving extraversion.

### 1.1. Face perception and sociosexuality

Human facial structures provide valuable information to conspecifics, particularly pertaining to health (Rhodes, 2006). This is a critical facet of short-term mating and indicates that such health identification is of paramount importance to unrestricted individuals. Facial symmetry is one such indicator of genetic quality associated with health and is an honest signal of pathogen resistance (Thornhill & Gangestad, 2006). Symmetrical individuals are also perceived as healthier, more likable, and more attractive (e.g., Fink, Neave, Manning, & Grammer, 2006). Given short-term strategists' emphasis on good genes, identifying faces connoting greater heritable fitness through symmetry would be adaptive among individuals interested in uncommitted sexual relationships to ensure optimum mating opportunities.

Previous research indicates more unrestricted individuals are indeed more sensitive to heritable fitness cues and indicate greater preference for them. For example, sociosexually unrestricted men exhibit heightened symmetry preferences in female faces and unrestricted women demonstrate a similar preference in male faces (Lustgraaf & Sacco, 2015; Quist et al., 2012; Sacco et al., 2009, 2012). These individuals may have been sensitive to cues connoting fitness for optimum mating opportunities in cross-sex individuals that would be heightened by short-term mating interest. Furthermore, Provost, Kormos, Kosakoski, and Quinsey (2006) found sociosexually unrestricted women preferred masculinized male faces and bodies. Heightened sensitivity also seems most apparent among unpartnered individuals, potentially related to lack of consistent access to mating opportunities (e.g., Lustgraaf & Sacco, 2015; Sacco et al., 2012).

### 1.2. Extraversion and face preferences

Although structures connoting health signal good genes, such cues may not readily communicate personality, a potential analog to infer targets' behavioral intentions or likely interest in short-term mating. One personality trait individuals may factor in mate selection may be extraversion. Previous research indicates greater-than-chance accuracy in identifying individuals' level of extraversion based on facial structure from composite images of those scoring high and low in the trait (Little & Perrett, 2007). Borkenau et al. (2009) demonstrated this acuity by having participants rate the degree to which targets exemplified Big Five traits following brief exposure to images of people who completed the personality inventory (50–150 ms). Participants accurately identified traits, even at 50 ms, with accuracy being especially high for extraversion.

Extraverted faces should signal affiliative opportunities, including social network access (Pollett, Roberts, & Dunbar, 2011). Beyond ubiquitous affiliative concerns, extraverted individuals are more attractive, thus desirable mates (Lukaszewski & Roney, 2011). In men, extraversion correlates with physical strength, a trait conducive to short-term mating success (Fink, Weege, Pham, & Shackelford, 2016; Lukaszewski & Roney, 2011). Welling, DeBruine, Little, and Jones (2009) also found extraverted women have greater preferences for masculine male faces. Given extraversion's association with sociosexuality (Schmitt & Shackelford, 2008), identifying extraverted individuals through veridical cues of personality in the face would be adaptive in identifying optimum short-term mates. Sociosexually unrestricted women's short-term mating interest should augment sensitivity to male facial cues connoting such opportunities. Their accurate identification of extraversion in male faces could ultimately aid them in finding partners who are similarly interested in short-term mating.

Despite the affiliative benefits of associating with extraverted individuals, one must also consider relational tradeoffs, due to the concurrent interpersonal costs extraverted individuals may invite. For

example, extraversion is associated with greater disease transmission and contraction (Nettle, 2005; Schaller & Murray, 2008). Given their greater short-term mating interest (and promiscuity), associating with extraverts may also threaten current relationships. Extraverted men are more likely to have extra-pair relations, implicating them as intrasexual competition or fidelity threats (Nettle, 2005). Furthermore, extraverted men are more dominant (Cheng, Tracy, & Henrich, 2010). Given these associations, it could be argued that extraverted men's interpersonal costs extend to physical safety. Despite its attractiveness in short-term mating, (Frederick & Haselton, 2007; Gallup, White, & Gallup, 2007), the association between men's strength and dominance could potentially implicate extraverted men as physically riskier mates. This would reduce their desirability among sociosexually restricted women. This sexual dimorphism would further suggest differential costs in extraverted conspecifics such that associating with extraverted men presents greater interpersonal costs over women, given that extraversion in women largely communicates affiliation (benefit) with no associated systematic costs (e.g., physical safety threat).

Nonetheless, despite costs, more sociosexually unrestricted women may be more willing to make tradeoffs by preferring extraverted men for their benefits to short-term mating in spite of any costs. Dominant male behavior presents fewer costs to women in short-term mating than long-term (Gangestad & Simpson, 2000). This could explain unrestricted women's greater preference for fitness cues in men, including muscular bodies (e.g., Provost et al., 2006) and masculinized faces (Sacco et al., 2012), since they would be less likely to commit to men who may be costly beyond a single sexual act. If extraverted male faces communicate traits indicating good genes and short-term mating interest, unrestricted women should exhibit greater interest in extraverted faces over introverted, as extraverted men would potentially provide greater short-term mating opportunities.

Since sociosexually unrestricted individuals are more sensitive to facial cues indicating fitness (e.g., Sacco et al., 2012), they should be more sensitive to cues connoting behavioral intentions for short-term mating. Specifically, this sensitivity should be greater for male faces communicating extraversion, given the cost asymmetry presented by the behavior and traits associated with extraversion in men and women. This sensitivity should thus manifest as preferences for extraverted male faces among sociosexually unrestricted women, because of their interest in good genes and targets' potential receptivity to short-term mating to facilitate their desired strategies. Because of the reduced interpersonal costs posed by extraverted women compared to men, sociosexuality should be less influential in identifying potential mating opportunities for men, as men may not need to consider the tradeoff as intently as would women. Importantly, given humans' accuracy in identifying extraversion through faces (e.g., Little & Perrett, 2007), this preference for male extraversion should occur based solely on facial structures. We hypothesized that sociosexually unrestricted women would demonstrate greater preferences for men's facially communicated extraversion over introversion, a potential analog to women's tradeoffs for uncommitted sexual relationships. We also predicted sociosexuality's role in predicting extraversion sensitivity would only occur in male faces; that is, female extraversion would generally be more associated with affiliation, rather than dominance or infidelity. Thus, men and women should prefer extraverted female relative to male faces, independent of sociosexuality.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants

A medium effect-size power analysis for an ANCOVA using G\*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007;  $f = 0.25$ ,  $\beta = 0.80$ ) indicated 128 participants were needed to detect effects. We deliberately oversampled by recruiting 207 Amazon Mechanical Turk workers

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