FEMALE CONDITION AFFECTS PERCEPTION OF MALE BODY ATTRACTIVENESS

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INTRODUCTION
Previous research has shown that the attractiveness of men's physique is in general related to cues of physical fitness (1) and health (2). However, recent research showed that various factors related to inter-individual variation and current state of the body modulates attractiveness preferences. One's own mate value appears to be an influential factor in mate preferences. More specifically, the physical attractiveness is an important determinant of the woman's mate value. (1) Therefore, a man's physique may affect female preferences, and Body Mass Index (BMI) may modulate female preferences for the male physique.

Another factor, which shows individual variation in preferences is fluctuation across the menstrual cycle (10, fluctuations in actual fertility). During the follicular phase of the cycle, when probability of conception is highest, women generally prefer more masculine faces (6), masculine body shape (5) or taller stature (6).

QUESTIONS
Does one's own physical attractiveness affect preferences for male physique?
Do fluctuations in actual fertility affect preferences for male physique?

METHODS

112 Czech women (mean age 26.5 ± 5.2) completed an on-line survey that obtained information about their Body Mass Index category (BMI 19.59, 20.50, 21.50, 22.50) and phase of the menstrual cycle from women not using hormonal contraception (2) (first day of the cycle and 4th-6th day of the cycle on the 7-point scale for attractiveness). A set of 23 black and grey men's body silhouettes based on Sheldon's Atlas of Man 6a varying in the level of their endos, mesos, and ecto-morphic components was used. The attractiveness ratings of each silhouette were correlated with a given value of each somatotype component and resulting correlation coefficients were used in subsequent analyses (19).

RESULTS

The correlation between somatotype component and attractiveness ratings was significant (19). The menstrual cycle phase influenced attractiveness ratings of male physique. During the follicular phase, women showed a higher preference for the somatotype component. Such differences may be interpreted as a way of improving reproductive strategy by increasing the probability of conception in greater (10).

DISCUSSION

As the morphofunctional component strongly influences attractiveness ratings, the results support the assumption that attractive traits serve as cues to physical fitness and health (6, 10, 19). The menstrual cycle phase influences attractiveness ratings of male physique. Differences in body condition and attractiveness preferences for men's physique and might be related to reproductive strategy (7, 10). Future research should examine the relationship between the menstrual cycle, attractiveness ratings, and reproductive strategy (7, 10).