THE FACE OF POWER

Wilhelm K. Klatt, Francine von Weissenfluh, & Janek S. Lobmaier

University of Bern, Department of Psychology

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
• Do specific postures which are associated with power have a bearing on the participant’s facial appearance?
• Are others able to distinguish faces after “high-power posing” from faces after “low-power posing”?

INTRODUCTION
• In humans and other animals, open, expansive postures (compared to contracted postures) are evolutionary developed expressions of power.
• These postures have been shown to cause neuroendocrine and behavioural changes.

METHOD
• 16 models (8 women, $M = 23.1\ years, SD = 3.1$) adopted two different high-power and two different low-power postures.
• Postures were held for 2 minutes each (power-posing sessions were performed on two consecutive days).
• Postures were described verbally and were demonstrated with images taken from Carney et al. (2010).

CONCLUSION
• Body postures influence facial appearance.
• After adopting a posture associated with high power you look more dominant.

RESULTS
• Facial pictures taken after high-power posing were chosen significantly more often as being more dominant looking than pictures taken after low-power posing ($M = .54, SD = .094, t = 4.24, p < .001$).
• There was no preference when asked to choose the most likeable photograph (50% chance level, $M = .504, SD = .091, t = .48, p = .63$).

DISCUSSION
• Faces after high-power posing are perceived as more dominant looking than the same faces after low-power posing.
• The underlying mechanism remains unclear (at least it seems not to rely on testosterone, or FWR, or head tilt).
• Maybe postures influence facial muscle activity?
• This finding may have implications for everyday life, for instance when a dominant appearance is needed.

REFERENCES