HAIR AND GENDER PERCEPTION
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INTRODUCTION

- Swami, Furnham, and Joshi (2008) found that hair length had only a weak effect on women’s physical attractiveness, health and fertility. Rather, hair color and skin tone were more important factors.
- Mesko and Bereczki (2004) suggest that medium-length and longer hair have a significantly positive effect on physical attractiveness; however, shorter hairstyles or hairstyles in which hair length was unknown did not have a significantly positive or negative effect.
  - From an evolutionary standpoint, those who can afford the high price of having long hair (i.e. upkeep and maintenance), have better phenotypic and genetic quality.
INTRODUCTION

- Brebner, Martin, and Macrae (2009) found that, even in the case of recognizable celebrities, hairstyles incongruent with gender expectations prompted associations with the opposite sex.
  - E.g. Celebrity men with long hair, who were traditionally associated with masculine traits, were more often associated with feminine ones.
- The present study aims to add to the limited literature on hair length and perceptions of gender-specific traits.
METHODS

Participants
- 24 participants including friends, family, and other people in close proximity aged between 18 and 55 years old
  - 13 Females
  - 11 Males

Materials
- Six pictures of the same woman with six different hairstyles, either short, neutral, and long
  - Two different short styles
  - Two different neutral styles
  - Two different long styles
- Notecards to paste the pictures during administration of experiment
- Four questions and five-point Likert scale
- Writing Utensil
Figure 1. Pictures that were presented to the participants and how they were numbered on the back of the notecards. Pictures 1 and 2 were used as a neutral picture in order to hide hair length. Pictures 3 and 5 were the models used to enforce gender congruent female traits while pictures 4 and 6 were used as the gender incongruent male traits.
Figure 2
Statements presented to participants

Picture ___

From looking at this picture, I assume this person is emotional?
1-Strongly Agree  2-Agree  3-Neutral  4-Disagree  5-Strongly Disagree

From looking at this picture, I assume this person is physically strong?
1-Strongly Agree  2-Agree  3-Neutral  4-Disagree  5-Strongly Disagree

From looking at this picture, I assume this person is nurturing?
1-Strongly Agree  2-Agree  3-Neutral  4-Disagree  5-Strongly Disagree

From looking at this picture, I assume this person is self-Confident?
1-Strongly Agree  2-Agree  3-Neutral  4-Disagree  5-Strongly Disagree

Figure 2. The first and third statements evaluated the participant’s perception of the model’s femininity while the second and fourth evaluated the participant’s perception of the model’s masculinity.
PROCEDURE

- Obtained informed consent and recorded participant’s age and gender
- To randomize the order in which each picture was evaluated, the pictures were fanned out face down, and the participant chose a picture to evaluate.
- The experimenter asked the participant to examine the picture and respond to the four statements that followed.
- Once the participant was finished with the picture, it was discarded so that the pictures were not repeated.
- This process was repeated for the remaining pictures.
- Participants were debriefed and informed that the experiment examined the link between hair length and gender specific traits.
RESULTS

There were significant findings for Questions 1, 2, and 3; however, the differences in hair length were not significant for Question 4.

Therefore, short hair is perceived to be less emotional, more physically strong, and less nurturing. In addition, hair length has no effect on perceived self-confidence.

Question 1: $F(2, 46)=8.74, p<.01$
Question 2: $F(2, 46)=33.97, p<.01$
Question 3: $F(2, 46)=6.70, p<.01$
Question 4: $F(2, 46)=2.75, p>.01$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Short Hair</th>
<th>Neutral Hair</th>
<th>Long Hair</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 1</td>
<td>$M=5.83$</td>
<td>$M=4.75$</td>
<td>$M=4.08$</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$SD=1.97$</td>
<td>$SD=1.29$</td>
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<td>$M=4.13$</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>$M=4.88$</td>
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<td></td>
<td>$SD=1.55$</td>
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<td>Question 4</td>
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<td>$M=4.21$</td>
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<td>$SD=1.58$</td>
<td>$SD=1.25$</td>
<td>$SD=1.29$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* The means displayed are from a five-point Likert scale, 1 being Strongly Agree and 5 being Strongly Disagree. The responses for each individual picture were added according to the hair length.
Our study compared well with the other studies that we researched, because they had similar findings.

For example, the study with the celebrities with long hair being considered more feminine because of their hair, and the fact that men rated women more healthy with longer hair and typically more attractive. Just like our study, there were significant differences in the impact on hair styles.

Our results revealed that hair length does make a significance on gender traits. We proved our hypothesis that hairstyle/length does impact the gender/traits because more people would assume short hair were strong and less nurturing.
LIMITATIONS

- More of a variety, with more hairstyle choices, and maybe more colors as well.
- Having more than just one model for our hair would make a difference, even though it was an interesting finding that even though the one models face that we used got different answers for each hairstyle she was wearing.
- Could have had more subjects.
- Some participants were realizing in the middle of the survey what our experiment was about, and I wonder if it influenced their decisions any.
- More questions, than what we already had.
REFERENCES

