

Abstract

Previous studies have pointed out an interesting fact: the use of hormonal contraceptives modifies the partner preferences of women towards men more feminine and genetically less compatible. This master thesis first tried to experimentally verify whether these different preferences are reflected in real mate choice outside the context of the laboratory. It includes two studies comparing partner satisfaction and relationship dynamics in couples that have been formed under the influence of pills versus under the influence of the natural menstrual cycle. Study 1 includes 3116 mothers and was conducted through an online questionnaire. The second study collected representative data from 1605 Czech men and women aged 35 to 65 years representing the population of the CZ also through a hand-to-hand questionnaire.

Study 1 confirmed the assumption in several ways: hormonal contraception users (during the mate choice) assessed their partners as less attractive and masculine compared with women who naturally cycled at that time. We also found their sexual satisfaction was reduced, however, they were more satisfied with non-sexual aspects of the relationship. In contrast to established hypotheses Study 1 found that the partnerships formed under the influence of hormonal contraceptives separated significantly less often than relationships that were formed when a woman naturally cycled. Study 2 results showed a (statistically insignificant) tendency of women (who took pills when they met a partner) to be on average more satisfied with family life and partnership, but dissatisfied with sexual compliance, which corresponds with the results of Study 1. On the contrary, men who were selected under the influence of hormonal contraception were more satisfied with all aspects of the partnership evaluated comparing to men who met their partners at the time when their partners were not taking pills (Study 2).

The explanation for this phenomenon may be related to higher relationship quality and commitment of men who were selected under the influence of hormonal contraception. Selection of such partners may ultimately outweigh the benefits of choosing genetically high-quality partners, especially in the context of long-term partnerships.