290
Personality Information Influences Perceived Cuteness of Children and Adults' Nurturing Motivation Toward Them

Reina Takamatsu[1], Takashi Kusumi[1], Hiroshi Nittono[2]
Kyoto University[1], Osaka University[2]

Email:
takamatsu.reina.4c@kyoto-u.ac.jp

Summary

- We demonstrated that personality information about young children influenced their perceived cuteness, warmth and competence.
- Positive information increased the ratings.
- Negative information reduced the ratings.
- Lower perceived infantile cuteness mediated the link between the negative personality condition and reduced nurturing motivation.
- Conclusion: Both infantile features (perceived cuteness) and non-physical personality traits of children are critical for activating and maintaining nurturing motivation.

Introduction

- Young children's infantile appearances (big eyes, short nose, narrow, chin, etc.) are perceived as cute and increase caretaking motivation (baby schema effect)[1].
- Personality information influences physical attractiveness for adults and babies[2, 3].
- In early childhood, personality traits develop rapidly, and parents can describe a toddler's personality in detail[4].
- Do non-physical traits influence adult ratings of children's perceived cuteness and motivation for caregiving?

Methods

Participants: 72 female adults (age range: 21 and 48 years)

Design: 2 (time: before and after manipulation) × 3 (personality information: positive, negative, no information) within-subject

Stimuli

Pilot 1: Fifty-four participants (40.7% female, M_{age} = 38.22, SD = 7.02) evaluated the cuteness of 40 images of royalty-free female and male children's faces (1 = not at all cute to 10 = very cute) .
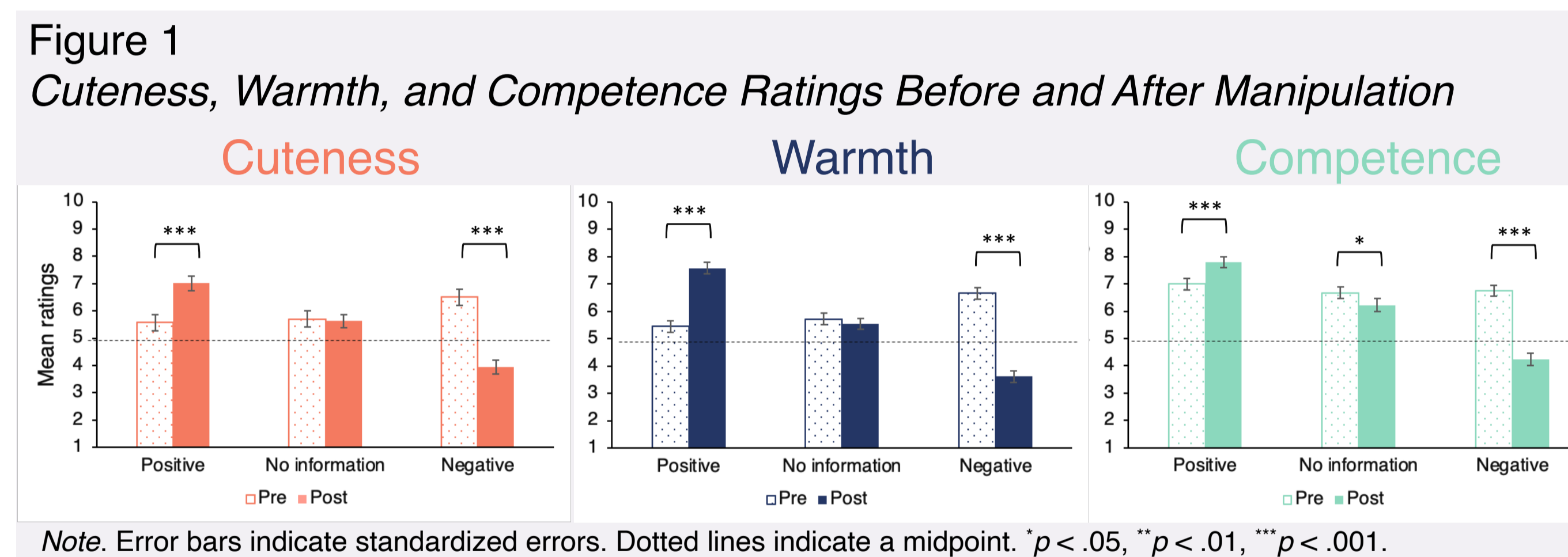
→ Female and male children's faces with low, moderate, high attractiveness were identified.

Pilot 2: Seventy participants (61.4% female, M_{age} = 20.35, SD = 0.66) rated the extent to which personality statements about young children were desirable (1 = very undesirable to 6 = very desirable).

→ desirable and undesirable personality trait statements were identified

Results

Effects of Personality Manipulation (Figure 1)

- For boys, a significant interaction between time and personality information for cuteness was found ($F(2, 142)$ = 75.93 and p <.001, η^2 = .517).
  - Positive personality condition: The cuteness, warmth, and competence ratings increased after manipulation ($p < .001$).
  - Negative personality condition: The three ratings decreased after manipulation ($p < .001$).
  - No significant differences were found in the no-information condition. However, the competence ratings decreased ($p = .017$).
- The same pattern was observed for girls.

Figure 1
Cuteness, Warmth, and Competence Ratings Before and After Manipulation

Note. Error bars indicate standardized errors. Dotted lines indicate a midpoint. $^*p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$, $^{***}p < .001$.

Experimental Procedure

2. Distractor task

Performed simple math quizzes and a visual search task (5 mins.)

3. Personality manipulation

The 6 child faces were presented one at a time with: positive personality information, negative information, or no information for 5 sec.
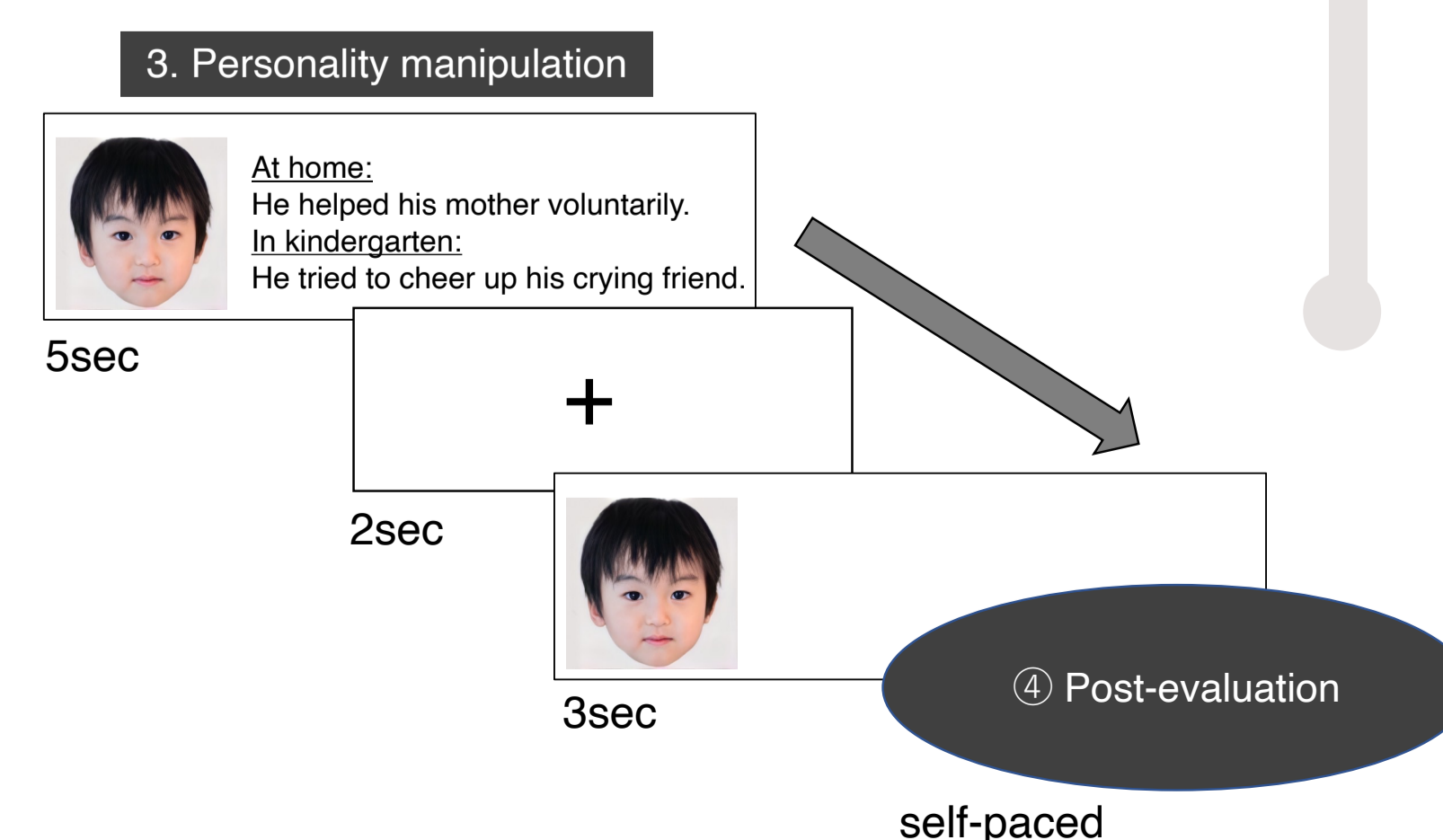
1. Pre-evaluation

Evaluated six child faces (3 girls, 3 boys) on:
-**Cuteness**: cute, adorable, endearing
-**Warmth**: good-natured, friendly, compassionate
-**Competence**: intelligent, capable, bright
-1 = strongly disagree; 10 = strongly agree

4. Post-evaluation

Evaluated the same six child faces on cuteness, warmth, and competence again. Additionally, rated the followings:
1) Infantile cuteness (3 items)
2) Nurturing motivation (2 items)
- 1 = strongly disagree; 10 = strongly agree

3. Personality manipulation

At home:
He helped his mother voluntarily.
In kindergarten:
He tried to cheer up his crying friend.

5sec

+

2sec

3sec

④ Post-evaluation

self-paced

Mediating Role of Infantile Cuteness, Predicting Nurturing Motivation for boys, girls (Figure 2)

- Infantile cuteness partially mediated the link between positive/negative personality information and nurturing motivation for boys.
- For girls, only the link between lower negative personality information and lower nurturing motivation was partially mediated by infantile cuteness.

Figure 2
Testing Mediation Models Predicting Nurturing Motivation
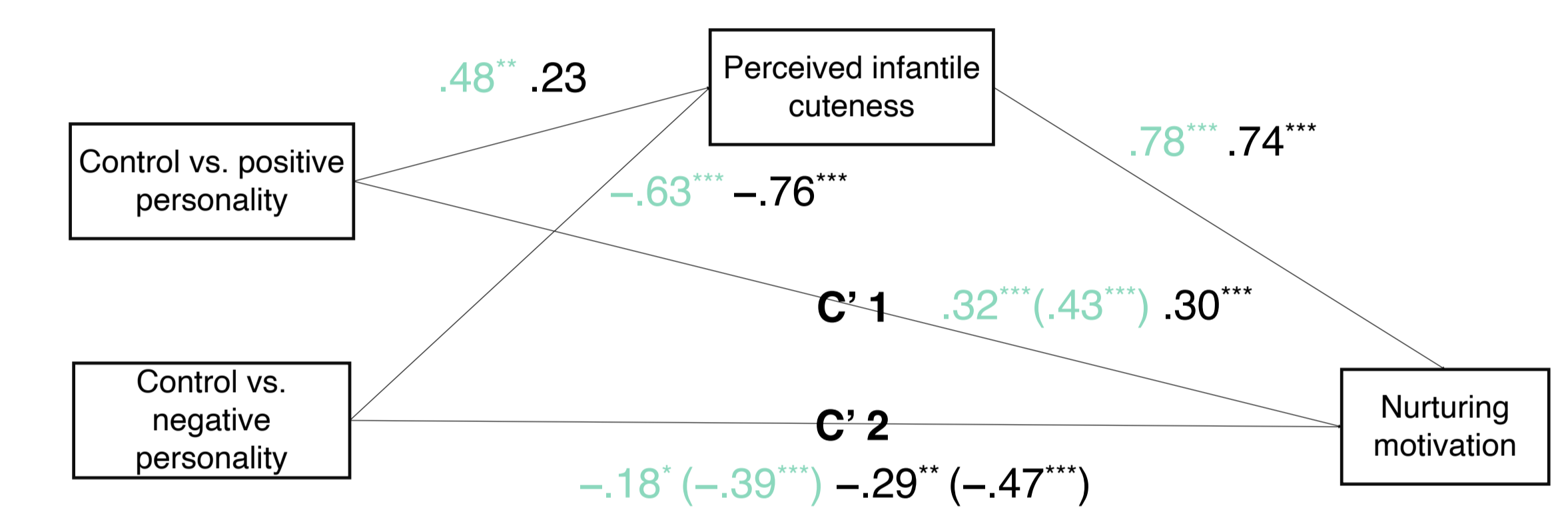
Note. $^*p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$, $^{***}p < .001$. Parental status was a covariate. Coefficients are standardized (boys, girls).

C'1 Boys: IE =.975, 95% CI(.410, 1.520)
C'2 Boys: IE = −1.285, 95% CI(−1.907, −.706) Girls: IE = −1.345, 95% CI(−1.900, −.808)

Discussion

- Personality information influenced female adults' ratings of young children's perceived cuteness, warmth, and competence.
  - Positive personality information increased the ratings.
  - Negative personality information decreased the ratings.
- Infantile cuteness partially mediated the link between personality information and nurturing motivation.
- Nurturing motivation toward children and parenting behavior may depend on non-physical traits of children.

References

1 Glocker, M. L., Langleben, D. D., Ruparel, K., Loughead, J. W., Gur, R. C., & Sachser, N. (2009). Baby schema in infant induces cuteness perception and motivation for caretaking in adults. *Ethology, 115*, 257–263.

2 Kniffin, K. M., & Wilson, D. S. (2004). The effect of nonphysical traits on the perception of physical attractiveness: Three naturalistic studies. *Evolution and Human Behavior, 25*, 88–101.

3 Parsons, C. E., Young, K. S., Bhandari, R., Ijzendoorn, M. H., Bakermans-Kranenburg, M. J., Stein, A., & Kringelbach, M. L. (2014). The bonnie baby: Experimentally manipulated temperament affects perceived cuteness and motivation to view infant faces. *Developmental Science, 17*, 257–269.

4 Mõttus, R. , Soto, C. J., & Slobodskaya, H. R. (2017). Are all kids alike? The magnitude of individual differences in personality characteristics tends to increase from early childhood to early adolescence. *European Journal of Personality, 31*, 313–328.