

Who's the daddy? It's hard to tell...

New research says most babies look nothing like their fathers, whatever mothers claim

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It has become a ritual of parenthood: gentle banter over whether the new baby looks like mum or dad. Dad, in most cases, is declared the victor after a bit of teasing.

But research has shown that mothers are conniving to manipulate paternal feelings. The findings show that while many mothers may say their new baby looks like his or her dad, this is simply a plot evolved to allay male anxiety about paternity.

The research, to be published in the journal *Evolution and Human Behavior*, contends that if dad sees himself in the baby, it makes him fatherly and more prepared to look after mum and child.

"We found that mothers claim a paternal resemblance at birth that does not correspond to the actual resemblance, suggesting possible manipulation of the perception of facial resemblance to increase confidence of paternity," say researchers.

Using pictures of babies and children up to the age of six, more than 200 independent judges were asked to study them for similarities to their parents.

Parents were asked who their babies and children most resembled. The judges were then asked to look at pictures of a child and choose a picture from one of three possible fathers or three mothers.

All the mothers said boys looked like their father, and 77 per cent said girls looked like him too. More than eight out of 10 men thought the child took after them. Yet the judges decided half the babies looked like mum, with one in three looking like dad.

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