

Beauty and the beholder—familiar faces breed attraction

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The faces of people around us influence what we find attractive, according to the latest research by the University of St Andrews.

The study, published today (May 18, 2017) by the journal *Human Nature*, examined how the appearance of a person's [population](#) influences their facial preferences.

Researchers Carlota Batres, Mallini Kannan and David Perrett found that people tended to prefer mates with the same characteristics as those they were most familiar to.

The study involved asking male and female subjects in different areas which men and women they found most attractive from digitally-manipulated face pairs. The researchers also collected photographs of the subjects which were then rated online by different participants residing in in another country.

The study found that the facial characteristics common to each person's population were considered to be the most attractive.

For example, the faces of women in [rural areas](#) of Malaysia and El Salvador were rated as looking heavier than women's faces from urban areas. Both male and female subjects in those rural areas preferred heavier-looking female faces.

Dr Carlota Batres, who led the research, said, "In a world where it is said that 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder', it might actually be that 'beauty is in the faces of those we behold', since we grow to like those around us."

Further research will be needed to examine just how far this effect can extend, such as whether binge watching a specific show could lead us to prefer [people](#) who look like those actors, or whether high exposure to politicians' [faces](#) could also influence our preferences.

Professor David Perrett, who runs the Perception Lab at St Andrews,

added, "Future research that examines beauty ideals between populations should also examine the [facial characteristics](#) that make up such populations."

More information: Carlota Batres et al. Familiarity with Own Population's Appearance Influences Facial Preferences, *Human Nature* (2017). [DOI: 10.1007/s12110-017-9289-8](https://doi.org/10.1007/s12110-017-9289-8)

Provided by University of St Andrews

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