

'Beauty goggles': New research on how attractiveness influences how we see people

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You've probably heard of "beer goggles", but a new scientific study published by Dr. Carlota Batres today has found evidence of "beauty goggles."

Previous research has found that people are able to make judgments of faces after only 100 milliseconds of exposure. With such little information, we are able to effortlessly and intuitively rate faces on a wide array of traits, such as attractiveness. Being able to quickly perceive attractiveness may be adaptive since it signals health and immune function.

Attractiveness has been said to have a positive "halo effect", where people tend to attribute positive [personality](#) traits to physically attractive individuals. Indeed, several studies have documented this effect. Most of this research, however, has been conducted using western samples. Some studies have found cross-cultural agreement in judgments between western and non-western samples, but other studies have found cross-cultural variation. Therefore, a new scientific article published today aimed to extend the cross-cultural work on this topic and examine the "attractiveness halo effect" in 11 world regions.

Over 11,000 participants from across 45 countries were recruited by a large cross-cultural collaborative network of researchers called the Psychological Science Accelerator. Participants were randomly assigned to rate one of 13 adjectives: attractiveness, aggression, caringness, confidence, dominance, emotional stability, intelligence, meanness, responsibility, sociability, trustworthiness, unhappiness, and weirdness. They rated the photos of 60 men and 60 women of different ethnicities.

What the study found was that attractiveness correlated positively with all of the socially desirable personality traits and negatively with all of the socially undesirable personality traits. More specifically, across all 11 world regions, male and female faces rated as more attractive were rated as more confident, emotionally stable, intelligent, responsible, sociable, and trustworthy. In other words, people tended to attribute positive personality traits to individuals high in [physical attractiveness](#).

Dr. Carlota Batres, who is the director of the Preferences Lab at Franklin and Marshall College, commented that "the results of our study provide evidence for what I am calling a 'beauty goggles' effect, where attractiveness clouds personality judgements."

This finding that we are "blinded by beauty" can have real-world effects. For instance, in jury studies, jurors recommend less severe sentences for more attractive defendants. This could in part be explained by the findings presented here that more attractive faces are judged as more responsible and trustworthy.

In conclusion, these new results provide strong evidence that "beauty goggles" are cross-cultural. The study was published in *Current Psychology*.

More information: Carlota Batres et al, Examining the "attractiveness halo effect" across cultures, *Current Psychology* (2022). [DOI: 10.1007/s12144-022-03575-0](https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-03575-0)

Provided by Franklin & Marshall College

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