

Are perceptions of human beauty grounded in culture or genes?

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.

Karl Grammer, professor of anthropology at the University of Vienna, has been a pioneer in human attraction and courtship research. He discusses what he and others have learned by studying human beauty from an evolutionary perspective.

Q: Why do you believe that our perceptions of human beauty were shaped by evolution?

KG: In all other animals, appearance plays a big part in mate selection and reproductive capability. I am a biologist, so I believe that this cannot be different for humans. Humans are obsessed with beauty. Beautiful children get less punishment than less-attractive children for the same misbehaviour. Even babies look more frequently at beautiful faces. When you find an obsession like this, there must be something deeper than a simple cultural norm. There are 3,000-year-old poems that talk about beauty and love — so this obsession goes through the whole history of mankind.

Q: So you disagree with those who argue that standards of beauty are culture-bound?

KG: Yes. People always say that beauty standards are generated, for instance, by fashion models. I do not think that is true. Models might have some influence, but only on a very small scale. Some argue that beauty is a myth — that “real beauty comes from inside”. This is completely untrue. Beauty provides reliable information about youth, fertility and health.

Read full, original post: [Q&A: Karl Grammer](#)