# Do our genes determine which faces are ‘prettier’ than others?

Despite the importance humans and society appear to place on beauty, from a scientific perspective, we don’t actually know a great deal about why certain faces appear “prettier” than others. Do genetics play a role here?

Researchers from the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW) have conducted a genome wide association study (GWAS) to identify parts of the genome associated with facial beauty.

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The study, published in PLOS Genetics, used genetic information from a sample of 4,383 European individuals including both men and women. Volunteers were asked to score the sample’s yearbook photos based on attractiveness.

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Several genes were identified across individuals that were measured as “attractive”, and, interestingly, these genes differed across the sexes. In women, specific genetic variants associated with beauty were also related to genes impacting body mass. In contrast, variants associated to attractiveness in males were linked to genes affecting blood cholesterol levels.

“Our results suggest that there is not a ‘master gene’ with strong effect on facial attractiveness. Instead, attractiveness is most likely controlled by a large number of weak genetic associations with complex regulatory effects.” [says researcher Qiongshi Lu.]

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