

WHY MEN PREFER PRETTY FACES

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So you think beauty is in the eye of the beholder? Think again. According to new research from the University of Exeter in Great Britain, the preference for pretty faces over ugly ones is embedded in our brains from the moment of birth and possibly prior to birth.

Newborn babies come fully equipped with built-in preferences, including a preference for an attractive face, that help them make sense of their new environment, report the BBC News Online and Newsweek magazine.

The Exeter researchers showed more than 100 infants two images that were placed side by side. One was of an attractive face, while the other was a less attractive face. The babies, ranging in age from five hours old to two days old, spent about 80 percent of the time looking at the attractive face, while barely glancing at the unattractive face.

"You can show them pair after pair of faces that are matched for everything other than attractiveness. This leads to the conclusion that babies are born with a very detailed representation of the human face," Dr. Alan Slater, a psychologist at Exeter, explained to the BBC News. Why would infants have this capability? "It helps them to recognize familiar faces--particularly that of the mother--and it helps them in learning about the social world.

Attractiveness is not simply in the eye of the beholder, it is in the brain of the newborn infant right from the moment of birth and possibly prior to birth," he added.

When those babies grow up, the preference for pretty faces doesn't change. And it crosses all cultures and geography as well. When an insular European is shown the faces of two Africans, the one he chooses as most attractive is also the same one an African chooses. And it works the other way around when an African is shown the faces of two Europeans.

"Although we think that standards of facial beauty vary over time and culture, they don't actually change that much," Slater explained to Newsweek. The evidence indicates that there is a biological and universal standard."

So don't blame a man when he can't help but look at a pretty face! He's biologically programmed that way.

