

Don't Talk to Hot Strangers



By Julianna LeMieux — June 15, 2016



Here's a question: Have you ever met someone and, right off

the bat, had the feeling that you could trust them?

Next question, were they good-looking?

It turns out that, if they were attractive, the way that you felt about them may have been out of your control. This is because we make judgements on whether or not someone is trustworthy within a fraction of a second after seeing their face. The more attractive, the more trustworthy.

It's been known for some time that adults do this. And, there is a lot of research done on the perception of different faces by babies. But what about elementary school-aged children?

Children aged 8-12 -- "tweens" as we call them -- want nothing more than independence from their parents. Not only are they starting to flex their own social muscles, but they also can be left be themselves more frequently. So, how do they decide who to ask for help, if needed?

Researchers at Wenzhou Medical University, China, wanted to know if children judged attractiveness and trustworthiness in ways similar to adults.

To do this, they tested 101 children (ages 8-12) and compared their answers to those of a group of 37 adults. The researchers generated 200 images of male faces -- all with a neutral expression and direct gaze. The children went through two sessions with the faces, at least one month apart. In the first session, they rated the person's trustworthiness (untrustworthy/ not sure / trustworthy) and in the second, their attractiveness (unattractive / not sure / attractive).

When they compared the children's responses to the adults' responses, they found that the children's responses of trustworthiness agreed with their level of attractiveness, meaning that they judged more attractive faces to also be more trustworthy. Interestingly, girls responses had a stronger correlation between attractiveness and trustworthiness than boys as did 12-year-olds' responses (in both sexes) when compared with 8-year olds.



If it's not clear that the "beauty stereotype" is real, look around. It goes without saying

that we treat attractive people better; they are considered to be more successful and social and are, in general, revered by our society. This bias, that we cannot control, is also being used left and right to manipulate us. For example, have you bought a bottle of "smartwater" lately? Why? Because it's *really* good water? Of course not.

Now, we have to watch out for our tweens because, as this study shows, they have the same initial biases as we do without the social aptitude that we have accrued over many years to be able to tell if their gut feeling was right or way (way) off. Not everyone who is attractive is trustworthy. (Just ask Sienna Miller about her ex-husband.)

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