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The Perceived Attractiveness of Adult Facial Prototypes

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THE PERCEIVED ATTRACTIVENESS OF ADULT FACIAL PROTOTYPES

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The mind creates mental prototypes by blending common features across patterns, in faces these are eyes, nose, mouth, and eyebrows. Past research demonstrated that prototypical faces are rated as more attractive than most individual faces. Symmetry confounds attractiveness ratings because the prototypes are more symmetric than individual faces. In the present study, symmetry was controlled by morphing each individual face with its mirror image to make an individual symmetric face. Adult male and female participants rated the attractiveness of the male and female symmetric individual faces and prototypes composed of 2, 4, 8, and 16 faces. Results indicated that attractiveness ratings increased as the number of faces in the prototype increased; the effect was highly significant, $F(4,104) = 145.241$, $p < .0001$. Since symmetry was controlled in this study and a significant effect was found for the level of the prototype, there must be other factors that contribute to a prototype's attractiveness.