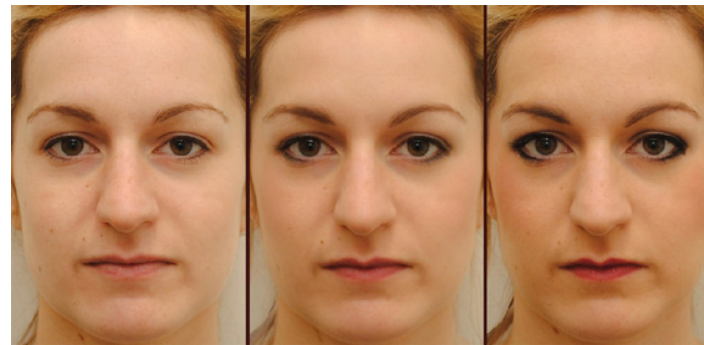




Above is an example of how the models looked before and after. Then, the researchers replicated, altered, and arranged each model's photos so that they progressed in a series from clean-faced to fully made-up. Each progression looked like this, except with 21 images for each model:



They showed the photo series to 44 Bangor University students. For each model's series, the subjects were told to select the photo that best represented what they themselves thought was most attractive, the one they thought most women would like best. Suffice it to say, ladies who frequent da club might have been dropping a fortune at Sephora for naught. The female participants thought the models looked better with slightly more makeup than the male participants did. However, all of the participants thought male observers would want the models to be wearing more makeup than female observers would. They were wrong—men and women preferred the same amount. And that amount was less than the models had actually applied. Specifically, people thought the models looked best when they were wearing just 60 percent as much makeup as they had actually applied. But they thought women would want the models to be wearing 75 percent as much, and that men would want 80 percent. (Interestingly, the men thought other men wanted the women to be wearing more makeup, even when they themselves didn't. As if to say, "Oh, I'm the progressive one around here. It's those other guys you have to watch out for.")wearing cosmetics to appeal to the mistaken

"Taken together, these results suggest that women are likely wearing cosmetics to appeal to the mistaken preferences of others," Jones and Kramer wrote in the study, forthcoming from the Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology. "These mistaken preferences seem more tied to the perceived expectancies of men, and, to a lesser degree, of women."

In other words, the models were primping for nonexistent ideals, not for actual humans.

The authors note that in past studies, animals would sometimes use fake sex cues, like experimentally lengthened tails, to try to attract a mate. The mate in question, though, could usually see through the ruse. Similarly, the cute guy at the croissant place probably knows your lips are not actually "Fuschia Flash"-colored.

A few things to keep in mind before you toss your eyeshadow collection. For one thing, the makeup of the women in the photos is more gaudy than what most adult women wear during the day. And not explored in the study is the world of contouring makeup, which usually makes the wearer look simply like they have a more defined face, rather than as though they just teleported in from Studio 54.

The judging took place in Bangor, a tiny hamlet in Wales, where beauty standards are probably different than they are in Beijing or Berlin or Baton Rouge.

Still, in this age of impossibly high beauty standards, it's comforting to consider that the only people who expect us to look flawlessly made-up, are ourselves.

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