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## REVIEW ARTICLE

# Comparison of aesthetic facial criteria between Caucasian and East Asian female populations: An esthetic surgeon's perspective

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## KEYWORDS

aesthetic criteria;  
Asian people;  
blepharoplasty;  
facial attractiveness;  
rhinoplasty

**Summary** Objective aesthetic criteria are important for patient evaluation and analysis during aesthetic surgeries, while successful aesthetic surgeries must take into account the underlying ethnic differences. The aim of this study is to help surgeons and scientists better plan facial aesthetic surgeries and understand the aesthetic needs according to different patients by reviewing and comparing the current aesthetic principles and preferences in Caucasian and East Asian populations.

PubMed and The Cochrane Library were searched using keywords regarding anthropometric measurements. Only original clinical studies and reviews written in English and Chinese and those that focused on the objective assessment of facial aesthetics in Caucasian and East Asian female populations were retained for review. Reference lists of the selected articles were also reviewed for eligible studies.

Sixty-five articles that described objective aesthetic criteria in Caucasian and East Asian female populations were found through PubMed, among which 47 included Caucasian populations and 18 included East Asian populations. Compared with White women, East Asian women prefer a small, delicate, and less robust face, lower position of double eyelid, more obtuse nasofrontal angle, rounder nose tip, smaller tip projection, and slightly more retruded mandibular profile.

Conflicts of interest: The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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Various differences exist between objective facial aesthetic criteria in Caucasian and East Asian populations. Further studies that focus on the objective aesthetic criteria of facial attractiveness in different ethnicities need to be conducted, especially in Asian countries. Level V: Opinions of respected authorities, based on clinical experience, descriptive studies, or reports of expert committees.

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## 1. Introduction

Facial attractiveness plays a key role in a variety of judgments in the course of social interaction. Various evidences have shown that attractive individuals exhibit more positive personality traits and also have more opportunities.<sup>1–4</sup> Mankind's interest in facial aesthetics can be traced back to the time of the Egyptians about 4000 years ago, when humans had already tried to define the aesthetic canons since the Greek period. These classical Greek canons were later formulated and documented by the Renaissance artists and scholars. More recently, the use of these neo-classical canons was propagated by the artist–anatomists of the 17<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries in the field of medicine.

However, scientific and systematic studies of facial attractiveness have come into its own during the past 30 years.<sup>5–8</sup> These studies showed that race and gender are important factors that impact aesthetic criteria. It is impossible for a surgeon performing cosmetic surgeries to understand and evaluate the patient's motivation and expectations or to obtain the satisfied surgical results if he does not understand the patient's ethnic aesthetic characteristics.

In East Asia, aesthetic surgeries are very popular nowadays (rhinoplasty and blepharoplasty are the top 2 procedures in the Department of Plastic Surgery). Although, if aesthetic standards have changed over the years due to the influence of Western culture,<sup>9</sup> Asian women still want to preserve their ethnic identities by refining their Asian features rather than totally Westernizing their appearance.<sup>10</sup> However, relatively few scientific studies have been conducted regarding the current aesthetic canons in East Asian populations, in spite of the potential importance of such canons in aesthetic surgery for Asian people.

The aim of this study was to review and compare the current objective aesthetic criteria in Caucasian and East Asian populations in order to help surgeons and scientists better plan facial aesthetic surgeries and understand the aesthetic needs according to the different patients. The facial landmarks that are often used in anthropometric measurement are shown in [Figure 1](#).

## 2. Methods

PubMed and The Cochrane Library were searched using the following words: "objective facial attractiveness," "ideal facial proportions," or "facial proportion canons" regarding the facial form and proportions; "eye anthropometric

measurement," "Asian blepharoplasty aesthetic criteria" regarding eyes; "principles in aesthetic rhinoplasty," "rhinoplasty ideal nasion position," "rhinoplasty ideal radix height," "rhinoplasty ideal nasal length," "rhinoplasty ideal dorsal shape," "rhinoplasty ideal tip projection," "rhinoplasty ideal shape of columella," "rhinoplasty ideal nasofrontal angle," or "rhinoplasty ideal nasolabial angle" regarding the nose; and "ideal lip and chin proportion," "ideal relationship between lip and chin," or "ideal lip position" regarding the lips and chin.

Only medical original clinical studies and reviews written in English and Chinese that focused on the objective assessment of facial aesthetics in Caucasian and East Asian female populations were retained for review. Reference lists of the selected articles were also reviewed for eligible studies.

## 3. Results

Using the search filter, 387 medical articles were found through PubMed and The Cochrane Library. Two hundred and two articles were considered irrelevant and were excluded after we reviewed the title and abstract, leaving 185 for retrieval. After reviewing full articles and references lists, there were 65 articles that described the objective aesthetic criteria in Caucasian or East Asian female populations ([Table 1](#)).

### 3.1. Facial form and proportions

#### 3.1.1. In Caucasian population

The Renaissance artists and scholars established the neo-classical canons which underlay their understanding of an ideal face that have often been used by modern plastic surgeons as working guides.

These neoclassical canons are as follows ([Figure 1](#)). (1) The head can be divided into equal halves, with special head height (vertex–endocanthion) and special face height (endocanthion–gnathion). (2) The face can be divided into equal thirds, with forehead height (trichion–nasion), nose height (nasion–subnasale), and lower face height (subnasale–gnathion). (3) The head can be divided into equal quarters, with height of calva (vertex–trichion), forehead height (trichion–glabella), special upper face height (glabella–subnasale), and lower face height (subnasale–gnathion). (4) The lower face can be divided into equal thirds, with subnasale–stomion, stomion–supramentale, and supramentale–gnathion. (5) The

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