



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA

DIPARTIMENTO
DI PSICOLOGIA
"RENZO CANESTRARI"

PhD Program in Psychology

Seminar

“Attractiveness and success”

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08/05/2025, 11:00 – 13:00

Aula E - Piazza Aldo Moro 90, Cesena

Abstract

Financial and prosocial biases in favor of attractive adults have been documented in the labor market, in social transactions in everyday life, and in studies involving experimental economic games. According to the taste-based discrimination model developed by economists, attractiveness-related financial and prosocial biases are the result of preferences or prejudices similar to those displayed toward members of a particular sex, racial, ethnic, or religious group. Other explanations proposed by economists and social psychologists maintain that attractiveness is a marker of personality, intelligence, trustworthiness, professional competence, or productivity. Evolutionary biologists have argued that attractive adults are favored because they are preferred sexual partners. Evidence that stereotypes about attractive people are causally related to financial or prosocial biases toward them is weak or nonexistent. Consistent with evolutionary explanations, biases in favor of attractive women appear to be more consistent or stronger than those in favor of attractive men, and biases are more consistently reported in interactions between opposite-sex than same-sex individuals. Evolutionary explanations also account for increased prosocial behavior in situations in which attractive individuals are simply bystanders. Finally, evolutionary explanations are consistent with the psychological, physiological, and behavioral changes that occur when individuals are exposed to potential mates, which facilitate the expression of courtship behavior and increase the probability of occurrence of mating. Therefore, multiple lines of evidence suggest that mating motives play a more important role in driving financial and prosocial biases toward attractive adults than previously recognized.

Reading: Maestripieri, D., Henry, A., Nickels, N. (2017). Explaining financial and prosocial biases in favor of attractive people: Interdisciplinary perspectives from economics, social psychology, and evolutionary psychology. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 40, 39-56.