

**Faculty Seminar, 18 November 2019**

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**Beauty and Adolescent Risky Behaviours**

**Abstract:**

A growing body of research demonstrates marked labour market benefits from physical attractiveness. Yet, how physical attractiveness influences earlier consequential decisions is not well understood. This paper estimates the effect of attractiveness in adolescence on one set of consequential outcomes, engagement in risky behaviours. We find robust evidence of marked effects of teenage attractiveness across a range of risky behaviours, including underage drinking, smoking, substance abuse and teenage sexual activity. More attractive individuals are more likely to engage in underage drinking, but markedly less likely to smoke or to be sexual active. Mediation analysis reveals that popularity, self-esteem, and personality attractiveness have roles as underlying mechanisms, yet substantial direct effects of physical attractiveness remain. Our findings suggest physical attractiveness in adolescence carries long-lasting consequences over the life course.