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Beautiful people earn more than their ugly workmates, says study

By BETH HALE

For those of us not blessed with film star looks, it confirms that life really is unfair.

Attractive men and women are not only more popular and successful but they actually earn more, researchers suggest.

The difference can amount to as much as 15 per cent of salary between the best and worst looking, it is claimed.

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Economists James Andreoni and Ragan Petrie wrote: "We find a beauty premium even though beautiful people contribute, on average, no more or less than others.

"Attractive people make more money than middle attractive people, who in turn make more money than unattractive people."

The reason for the premium is depressingly shallow.

There is an assumption that beautiful people are more cooperative and helpful.

"The beauty premium is not due to the actions of attractive people, but seems to be due to the expectations of how attractive people will behave," said the U.S. study reported in the Journal of Economic Psychology.

Researchers studied three groups of subjects, who were rated according to general perceptions of physical attractiveness, during an experimental investment game.

In the study, 38 per cent of attractive subjects were judged as looking helpful, compared with only 18 per cent of 'middle attractive' and only 5 per cent of unattractive.

All, however, is not lost for those who feel that reward should relate to hard work alone.

When beautiful people are not pulling their weight, their looks count against them and it is the unattractive who come out winners.

In a group setting when attractive people were revealed as being no more or less co-operative than others, the less attractive group gained the most reward.