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Risk-taking boys do not get the girls

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WHETHER it's driving too fast, bungee-jumping or reckless skateboarding, young men will try almost anything to be noticed by the opposite sex. But a study of attitudes to risk suggests that the only people impressed by their stunts are other men.

Futile risk-taking might seem to have little going for it in Darwinian terms. So why were our rash ancestors not replaced by more cautious contemporaries?

One idea is that risk-takers are advertising their fitness to potential mates by showing off their strength and bravery. This fits with the fact that men in their prime reproductive years take more risks. To test this idea, William Farthing of the University of Maine in Orono surveyed 48 young men and 52 young women on their attitudes to risky scenarios. Men thought women would be impressed by pointless gambles, but women in fact preferred cautious men (Evolution and Human Behaviour, vol 26, p 171).

Reckless thrill-seekers might be trying a more subtle route to women's affections. Men say they prefer their same-sex friends to be risk-takers, and women prefer high-status males. "So if he has higher status among other men, women might like him for his status, even though they don't like the risk-taking in itself," Farthing says.

Source [2].

Misc

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