

# Women do make men throw caution to the wind, research confirms

March 19 2010

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The presence of an attractive woman elevates testosterone levels and physical risk taking in young men, according to a recent study in the inaugural issue of *Social Psychological and Personality Science*.

Researchers asked young adult [men](#) to perform both easy and difficult tricks on skateboards, first in front of another male and then in front of a young, attractive female. The skateboarder's testosterone levels were measured after each trick.

When skateboarders attempt tricks, they make a split-second decision about whether to abort the trick or try to land it, based on a mid-air evaluation of the likelihood of success and on the physical costs that failure might bring. It was that moment the researchers sought to examine because it resembles the type of risky decisions that young men make when behind the steering wheel of a car or when in physical confrontations with each other.

Consistent with predictions, the young men took greater risks in the presence of the attractive female even when they knew there was a greater chance that they would crash. [Testosterone](#) levels were significantly higher in these men than in the men who were in the presence of another male.

"This experiment provides evidence for an effect that has existed in art, mythology, and literature for thousands of years: Beautiful women lead men to throw caution to the wind," write authors Richard Ronay and

William von Hippel. "These findings suggest that, for men, the adaptive benefits gained by enticing mates and intimidating rivals may have resulted in evolved hormonal and neurological mechanisms that facilitated greater risk taking in the presence of attractive women."

**More information:** The article "The presence of an attractive woman elevates testosterone and physical risk taking in young men" in Social Psychological and Personality Science is available free for a limited time at [spp.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/1/1/57](http://spp.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/1/1/57)

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