

If You've Got It, Flaunt It: Humans Flaunt
Attractive Partners For Status And Desirability

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ABSTRACT

Mate choices that are influenced by the mating decisions of peers, i.e., nonindependent choice, occur in many species including humans. Recent research on humans has shown that women are more attracted to men with attractive putative partners than those with less attractive partners. I frame human nonindependent mate choice in the context of a mate signalling theory (MST) and test predictions in two ecologically valid experiments. In study 1, I found that both men and women show off or “flaunt” attractive putative mates, and that men but not women hide or “conceal” unattractive ones. This effect was mediated by expected status and desirability of being seen with these partners. In study 2, I replicated the results of study 1 with a sample of only men. I further found, contrary to extant theoretical perspectives, that men desire to flaunt attractive putative mates equally to both opposite and same sex peers. Results are discussed in light of the MST, a potentially powerful generator of hypotheses and explanations for many facets of human mating.