

TALK

PROXIMITY AND TOUCHING: OBSERVATIONAL RESEARCH ON MATE GUARDING IN HUMANS

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ABSTRACT

Mate guarding behaviors are strongly selected for in species that suffer from infidelity and cuckoldry. Two forms of mate guarding behaviors that have been found in self-report studies on humans are proximity and touching. Proximity actively prevents infidelity through the physical act of being present. Touching indirectly prevents infidelity by signaling to any potential rivals that their partner is taken, as well as signaling to the partner that they are being watched. More observational research of mate guarding behaviors is needed though. With this in mind, we hypothesize that proximity and touching will be used as forms of mate guarding when in the presence of a potential romantic rival. Couples participating in the study interacted with an attractive confederate and their proximity and touching behaviors were recorded. Results show that proximity and touching behaviors increased while in the presence of the confederate. When an attractive confederate was present, couples sat closer to and touched each other more often than they did when they were alone, showing that humans engage in these forms of mate guarding.