

TALK

ATTRACTION TO INDIVIDUALS WITH ANTISOCIAL PERSONALITY TRAITS: AN EVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Individuals adopt different evolved mating strategies influenced by parental investment, self-perceived value, and the perception about competitors when choosing and maintaining a potential partner. While most individuals typically prefer prosocial traits in romantic partners, some are attracted to antisocial personalities and even criminal behavior. This study investigates two potential evolutionary mechanisms behind this uncommon preference: homogamy (preference for self-similar traits) and the desirability by-product mechanism (attraction to antisociality when paired with desirable characteristics). Participants ($N = 391$) reported their own Dark Triad traits (Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy) and rated the attractiveness of hypothetical partners described in fictitious vignettes in one of six conditions: 1) prosocial traits (control), 2) Dark Triad traits, 3) Dark Triad traits with aggression crime, and Dark Triad traits with aggression crime paired with either 4) fame, 5) wealth, or 6) attractiveness. Results supported homogamy: individuals with higher Dark Triad scores preferred partners with similar traits. The desirability by-product hypothesis was not supported by the experimental design: prosocial profiles were consistently rated as more desirable than antisocial profiles and profiles with criminal record, even when paired with desirable traits. This suggests that antisocial traits, especially when combined with criminal behavior, act as evolutionary dealbreakers in mate choice for both short-term and long-term relationships for both sexes. The findings highlight the role of homogamy in partner preferences and the limits of desirable traits in counteracting the undesirability of antisocial behavior.