

Are women more attracted to 'dark and brooding' men?

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A paper co-authored by a researcher from the University's Institute of Psychology, Health and Society states that women are generally drawn to men with dark and brooding looks. This in turn may relate to their

reproductive success.

University researcher, Dr Minna Lyons, and colleagues from Jagiellonian University Medical College, Poland and The University of Turku, Finland published the paper entitled 'Women's reproductive success and the preference for Dark Triad in men's Faces' in the *Journal of Evolution and Human Behaviour*.

Dark Triad

The term 'Dark Triad' refers to a group of three personality traits: narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy. Use of the word "dark" implies that people scoring high on these traits have malevolent qualities.

- Narcissism is characterized by pride, egotism, grandiosity and a lack of empathy
- Machiavellianism is characterized by exploitation and manipulation of others, a disregard for morality, and a focus on self-interest and deception
- Psychopathy is characterized by enduring anti-social behaviour, selfishness, callousness, impulsivity and remorselessness

As part of the study 2,370 adult female volunteers were shown a selection of computer simulated men's [faces](#) in sets of two – with one face with more or less of the 'Dark Triad' features than the other. The women were asked which of the two they were most attracted to.

Some were attracted to men with strong features associated with psychopathy or Machiavellian traits or narcissists while others were not. These features range from appearing 'aggressive' and 'less happy' as relating to psychopathic tendencies to 'dishonest' for Machiavellian and 'masculine' and 'dominant' for narcissists.

Reproductive success

Dr Lyons, said: "We examined whether the preferences of the women surveyed for the Dark Triad personality traits in men's faces were related to reproductive success. Previous studies have found that out of the three Dark Triad features, narcissism was associated with physical and psychological health benefits in men as well as social success.

"We predicted that women's preference for narcissism could be most strongly related to their reproductive success, and as we found that women with preference for high narcissistic men's faces gave birth to more offspring. Women with strong preference for Machiavellian male faces reported fewer offspring than their same-aged peers with weak preference. Those with a preference for psychopathic men's faces was unrelated to women's current number of offspring.

"These findings suggest that in today's society women's [preference](#) for some of the Dark Triad traits in men may be related to their [reproductive success](#)."

The full paper can be found on the Journal of *Evolution and Human Behaviour* website.

More information: Urszula M. Marcinkowska et al. Women's reproductive success and the preference for Dark Triad in men's faces, *Evolution and Human Behavior* (2016). [DOI: 10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2016.01.004](#)

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