

Women who feel more at risk of crime also prefer physically dominant partners

February 26 2016

Women who prefer physically formidable and dominant mates (PPFDM) tend to feel more at risk of crime regardless of the situation or risk factors present, according to research from the University of Leicester.

Previous research suggests that women who grow up in high-crime areas and perceive they are at risk of criminal victimisation find dominant men more appealing, perhaps because of the protection they can offer.

However, the University of Leicester team suggests that women who are attracted to dominant men generally feel more at risk of victimisation, even when their risk of victimisation is actually low.

PhD researcher Hannah Ryder from the University of Leicester's Department of Neuroscience, Psychology and Behaviour, explained: "PPFDM appears to be associated with women's self-assessed vulnerability. Women with strong PPFDM feel relatively more at risk, fearful, and vulnerable to criminal victimisation compared to their counterparts, regardless of whether there are situational risk factors present.

"Our research suggests that the relationship between feelings of vulnerability, as measured by fear of crime, and women's preference for physically formidable and dominant mates is stable, and does not update according to environmental circumstances or relative level of protection needed."

The study involved assessing whether the relationship between fear of crime and PPFDM was higher for crimes that cause relatively higher physical and psychological pain, such as sexual assault.

Across two studies in the lab and field, women observed images and real life situations that varied in the risk of crime, such as crime hotspots and safespots, and were asked to rate their perceived risk of victimisation - a measure of fear of crime - of various crimes.

This included male - and female - perpetrated physical assault and robbery and male-perpetrated rape.

In both studies, the research team also administered a scale that measured women's PPFDM, and assessed the association between women's PPFDM score and their risk perception scores.

The study found that [women](#)'s fear of crime significantly differed in response to crime cues - for example location and time of day - and that overall fear of crime was related to PPFDM.

However, the relationship between PPFDM and [fear](#) did not vary in relation to risk situation, perpetrator gender, or crime type, suggesting that the psychological mechanisms underlying the relationship between perceived risk of victimisation and PPFDM are general in nature.

The research was undertaken as part of Hannah's PhD project at the University of Leicester and was funded by a Psychology Postgraduate Affairs Group (PsyPAG) research grant. Study co-authors include Dr Heather Flowe from Loughborough University, Dr John Maltby and Lovedeep Rai from the University of Leicester and Dr Phil Jones from the University of Birmingham.

More information: Hannah Ryder et al. Women's fear of crime and

preference for formidable mates: How specific are the underlying psychological mechanisms?, *Evolution and Human Behavior* (2016).
[DOI: 10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2016.01.005](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2016.01.005)

Provided by University of Leicester

Citation: Women who feel more at risk of crime also prefer physically dominant partners (2016, February 26) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-02-women-crime-physically-dominant-partners.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.