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Psychopaths: cheaters or warrior-hawks?

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Abstract

From a life history perspective, psychopaths can be thought to pursue both social cheating and warrior-hawk strategies. The Cheater Hypothesis suggests that psychopaths would exhibit more indignation, and less empathy and altruism than nonpsychopaths. According to the Warrior-Hawk Hypothesis, psychopaths should also be more aggressive. Questionnaires measuring empathy, altruism, indignation, antisociality, aggression, and behavioral activation and inhibition were administered to 37 psychopathic inmates, 40 nonpsychopathic inmates, 42 community recruited volunteers, and 38 undergraduate students. Both hypotheses received some support: psychopathic participants scored significantly higher than other participants on measures of indignation and aggression. Consistent with both hypotheses, psychopaths also had a lower ratio of behavioral inhibition to activation than other participants. Contrary to expectations, psychopaths did not score lower on measures of empathy or altruism.

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Keywords

Psychopathy; Cheater; Warrior-hawk; Evolution; Antisociality

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