

Innate Competitiveness: The Young Male Syndrome

By Hafsa Shañi



Art by Yixin Katherine Shan

Unemployed young males are the most likely to commit risky, violent actions in the face of competition. Such aggressive behaviors are often seen as impulsive and detrimental, raising the question of why this behavior has evolutionarily persisted if it often leads to harm. One proposed explanation is that males compete for mates, with only the most aggressive succeeding in mating. However, this explanation overlooks the risky actions that young males engage in to preserve their social status. Evidently, innate competitiveness for a mate cannot alone explain young adults' inclination toward homicidal actions, and the persistence of this behavior requires further research.

References

Wilson, M. and Daly, M. (1985). Competitiveness, risk taking, and violence: The young male syndrome. *Ethology and Sociobiology* 6, 59-73.