

DARK VALUES: THE DARK TRIAD IN SCHWARTZ' VALUE TYPES

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Abstract

Based on the still not fully understood link between personality traits and values, this study set out to investigate how much the Dark Triad (Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy) accounts for Schwartz's 10 human universal value types. Participants were measured on the Big Five, the Dark Triad, and Schwartz's values. The results were medium to strong correlations between the Dark Triad in 9 out of the 10 value types. Also, while the Big Five captured between 18–43% of the variance on the value types, the Dark Triad explained up to 23% additional variance, in particular on self-enhancing values. Machiavellianism accounted for most of this additional variance, followed by narcissism, and psychopathy. Consequences and other research directions are discussed.

Key-words: Dark Triad, universal values, morality, Dark Values

Personality trait theory is an approach to the study of general personality dispositions (i.e., behaviors, thoughts, and emotions) enduring over time (McCrae & John, 1992). A subset of the more general personality dimensions is known as the Dark Triad (i.e., Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy) which represents malevolent and anti-social personality traits in the general population (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Recent studies include investigations of the relation between Dark Triad traits and behaviors of moral pertinence, such as Internet use (Buckels, Trapnell, & Paulhus, 2014), schadenfreude (James, Kavanagh, Jonason, Chonody, & Scrutton, 2014), and counter-productive work behaviors (O'Boyle, Forsyth, Banks, & McDaniel, 2012). The latter line of research relates to an overarching research tradition of trying to ascertain how personality traits and work behavior are related. The Dark Triad explains moderate amounts of variance when it comes to explaining counterproductive work behaviors (O'Boyle et al., 2012; Spain, Harms & LeBreton, 2014). The dysfunction related to interpersonal relations featured in the Dark Triad is of particular interest here, as we conduct an exploratory study of how personal values relate to dark personality traits.

Roccas, Sagiv, Schwartz, and Knafo (2002) examined how general personality traits are associated with values, concluding that the two constructs are related, but both conceptually and empirically distinct. Traits account for how people behave,

whereas values describe what people consider important. Values also reflect motivational content, in the sense that values reflect goals one wants to achieve (Schwartz, 1992). Little is known about which sets of values are endorsed by individuals with high scores on the Dark Triad, as opposed to those with lower scores. In this study we investigated and coined the term *Dark Values*, denoting the set of values held by high scorers on the Dark Triad.

Personality traits and values

Personality Traits in the Big Five and the Dark Triad

Enduring individual differences in general personality traits are most commonly measured with the Five-Factor Model, or Big Five (Costa & McCrae, 1992), comprised by the dimensions: Openness to Experience (O), Conscientiousness (C), Extraversion (E), Agreeableness (A), and Neuroticism (N). The Big Five represents the most reliable and universal take on personality structure, and can be utilized in predicting a wide variety of behaviors (Judge, Heller, & Mount, 2002; Roberts, Kuncel, Shiner, Caspi, & Goldberg, 2007). The Big Five has been referred to as “the most scientifically rigorous taxonomy that behavioral science has produced” (Reis, 2006, in Costa & McCrae, 2008, p. 214), and it applies to both normal and abnormal personality traits (Markon, Krueger, & Watson, 2005).

While the Big Five describes the general constitution of a normal personality, destructive traits are better captured by the Dark Triad, which denotes manipulative, selfish, and callous dispositions in the general population (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). It is comprised of Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy. Machiavellianism refers to manipulative behaviors, for instance utilizing lying or flattery to achieve power (Christie & Geis, 1970; Jones & Paulhus, 2009). Narcissism refers to self-centeredness, showing exaggerated self-appraisal, and self-image (Paulhus & Williams, 2002), and psychopathy is characterized by callousness, lack of empathy and impulsivity (Jones & Paulhus, 2014). The Dark Triad dimensions show significant overlap but have nevertheless been found to be both theoretically and empirically distinct (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). It should be noted that the terms “narcissists,” “Machiavellians,” and “psychopaths” are not used as diagnostic labels, but as abbreviations for individuals characterized by high scores on the respective trait measures; no pathology is implied, as the terms refer to subclinical constructs. However, subclinical samples cover a wide range and therefore naturally include extreme cases (Ray & Ray, 1982). Personality traits in the Big Five and in the Dark Triad are defined as highly heritable and dispositions of temperament; thereby being different from needs, motives, and values, which are known to be more subject to influence and change (Parks & Guay, 2009; Roccas et al., 2002).

Values

Values are defined as enduring goals under cognitive control (Roccas et al., 2002). Some evidence suggests that traits are more related to behaviors over which people have little cognitive control and that values mostly influence behavior when activated (Roccas et al., 2002; Verplanken & Holland, 2002). Schwartz's theory of basic universal human values is one of the most theoretically developed and tested value models (Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz & Boehnke, 2004). The model consists of 10 universal value types (each described by two exemplary items in parenthesis): *Security* (national security, social order), *Tradition* (devoutness, humility), *Conformity* (obedience, honoring parents), *Benevolence* (helpfulness, loyalty), *Universalism* (social justice, equality), *Self-direction* (creativity, independence), *Stimulation* (exciting life, varied life), *Hedonism* (pleasure, enjoying life), *Achievement* (success, ambition), and *Power* (authority, wealth) (Schwartz, 2007). These 10 value types are commonly illustrated in a quasi-circumplex model (Figure 1), from which two orthogonal axes can be derived: Self-enhancement–Self-transcendence and Openness to change–Conservation (Schwartz, 1992).

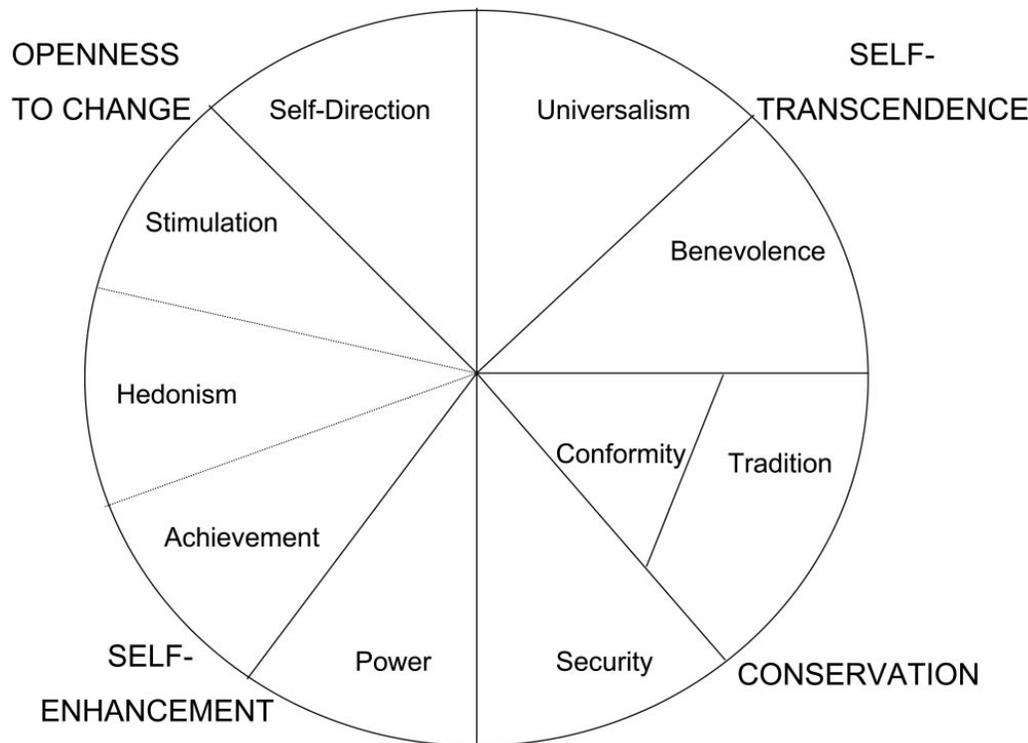


Figure 1. The original Schwartz's value types (Schwartz, 1992).

Traits and Values

Olver and Mooradian (2003) presented an integrative model with personality traits representing “nature”, and values as learned behaviors representing “nurture”.

This was based on the idea that values seem to be more externally influenced by environmental factors, while traits more internally influenced by genetic factors. The premise of this study is that personality traits of adults are antecedents of values. The developing field of personality neuroscience (DeYoung & Gray, 2009) provides additional support for this premise, demonstrating biological correlates of the Big Five traits (DeYoung, 2010).

Considering the respective long histories of research on traits and values, these constructs have been infrequently studied together (Olver & Mooradian, 2003; Parks & Guay, 2009). The most recent meta-analysis compiled a total of 60 studies (Parks-Leduc, Feldman, & Bardi, 2014) pertaining to a wide range of behaviors, but no study has connected values to deviant traits such as those covered by the Dark Triad. Demonstrated links between the two are likely to further our understanding of why people behave and feel the way they do, which is the main purpose of this paper.

Dark Values

The Dark Triad traits are seen in interactions with others, a common feature being the tendency to exclude others and promote oneself (Gurtman, 2009; Rauthmann & Will, 2011). A possible unifier of Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy lies in the disregard for conventional morality (Campbell et al., 2009; Furnham, Richards, & Paulhus, 2013). Values are intimately connected, but not synonymous, with morality in that they reflect what people believe to be good or bad (Bardi, Lee, Hofmann-Towfigh, & Soutar, 2009; Schwartz, 2007).

The present study aims to identify which values are shared by dark personalities by ascertaining the relationships between the factors in the Dark Triad and Schwartz's 10 value types. The main prediction is that the Dark Triad explains additional variance on universal values, after controlling for the Big Five traits. On the assumption that the main prediction holds, the second prediction is a positive relationship between the Dark Triad and Self-enhancing values (Power and Achievement), on the basis that they emphasize the pursuit of self-interest (Schwartz, 1992). From this it follows that a negative relationship is to be expected with Self-transcendence values (Universalism and Benevolence), being that the value circumplex is orthogonal. An exploratory approach with no proposed predictions was used regarding Openness to change (Self-direction, Stimulation, and Hedonism) and Conservation values (Security, Conformity, and Tradition). No causality is implied in the reporting of the study. When discussing the results values are often spoken of in terms of dimensions which indicate their location in the circumplex (cf. Figure 1). The term "Dark Values" coined in this study refers to the values adopted by high scorers on the Dark Triad.

Method

Participants

The participants ($N = 155$) constituted two samples. The first sample was from University West in Sweden and consisted of a class of 79 freshmen from a human resource management program (63 female, 16 male; 18 to 56 years, $M = 25.1$, $SD = 7.2$).

The second sample was collected through Amazon's international online polling service, Mechanical Turk (MTurk). This method of adding online samples has been used successfully in previous studies (Buckels, Trapnell, & Paulhus, 2014; Jones & Paulhus, 2014). MTurk has demonstrated reliability (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011), and provides a good spread of socio-economic backgrounds (Casler, Bickel, & Hackett, 2013). The sample consisted of 76 US participants (46 female, 30 male; 18 to 82 years, $M = 42.6$, $SD = 15.4$), having completed at least 50 MTurk tasks with an acceptance rate of 95% or more, according to recommendations. The participants were compensated with \$1. Five control questions were added to ensure that participants were paying attention (e.g. "*This questionnaire is about classical economics*"). This procedure led to the exclusion of 9 participants.

Cronbach's alphas were calculated and compared with a meta-analysis (Parks-Leduc et al., 2014), yielding similar results. Samples differed significantly ($p < .01$) on two traits; Extraversion which was higher in the Swedish sample and Openness which was higher in the online US sample. Both samples corresponded very well with meta-analytic results (Parks-Leduc et al., 2014), which demonstrates the reliability of the data.

Instruments

The Big Five Inventory (BFI-44; John, Naumann & Soto, 2008) is a 44-item self-report personality inventory, ranging from 1-5 ("*Strongly disagree*" to "*Strongly agree*"). Participants rated how much they agreed with statements such as: "*I see myself as someone who is full of energy*" (i.e., Extraversion). Items were averaged to create each dimension.

The Short Dark Triad (SD3; Jones & Paulhus, 2014) is a 27-item self-report questionnaire, ranging from 1-5 ("*Strongly disagree*" to "*Strongly agree*"), which has been used successfully in other MTurk studies (e.g., Buckels, Trapnell, & Paulhus, 2014; Jones & Paulhus, 2014). Participants rated how much they agreed with statements such as: "*You should wait for the right time to get back at people*" (i.e., Machiavellianism). Items were averaged to create each dimension.

The Portrait Value Questionnaire (PVQ-40; Schwartz et al., 2001) is a 40-item self-report questionnaire that measures values by allowing the participant to identify with short vignettes. These are scored on a six-point Likert scale ranging from

“Not like me at all” to “Very much like me”. The scale requires centering to control for differences in individual response patterns. All questionnaires were administered in the original English versions, both in class and online (30 min). The mandatory high-level English ability and practical use in Swedish universities is believed to secure a similar high level of understanding (Bolton, & Kuteeva, 2012).

Results

Descriptive statistics

BFI-44 means and standard deviations for Openness ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 0.68$), Conscientiousness ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 0.61$), Extraversion ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.86$), Agreeableness ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 0.65$), and Neuroticism ($M = 2.85$, $SD = 0.91$) conformed to expectations. Cronbach’s alphas for BFI-44 were very good, ranging from .82-.91. SD3 and PVQ-40 descriptives are reported in Table 1 and 2, respectively. Being that the purpose of using the Big Five is as a control, the correlations between the Big Five and the Dark Triad, and the Big Five and PVQ have been omitted. However, analyses show that the data conformed to the expected results based on previous studies (e.g., Paulhus & Williams, 2002; Roccas et al., 2002).

Table 1
Descriptive Analysis of the Dark Triad (SD3)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	S	K	1	2	3
1 Machiavellianism	2.93	0.71	-.17	-.25	.84		
2 Narcissism	2.77	0.66	-.36	.16	.44	.81	
3 Psychopathy	2.18	0.65	.22	-.42	.70	.46	.75

Note. $N = 155$. All correlations significant at .001 level (two-tailed). S = Skewness; K = Kurtosis. Cronbach’s alphas for Dark Triad are reported in the diagonal (*italics*).

Dark Triad and Schwartz’s value types

The relationship between the Dark Triad and Schwartz’s 10 value types are summarized in Figure 2. As expected, the correlations with Self-enhancing values such as Power (PO) and Achievement (AC) were particularly strong. The opposite, Self-transcending values such as Universalism (UN) and Benevolence (BE), showed slightly smaller effects.

Furthermore, a sinusoidal pattern emerges depicting how Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy relate to the circumplex structure. The correlations align with the orthogonal structure of the circumplex: starting at Tradition (TR), the

trend is a negative relationship reaching a null-effect at Self-direction (SD), with a continued positive relationship peaking at Power (PO). After Bonferroni corrections, effects over ($r > .26$) are significant at $p < .01$ and effects over ($r > .31$) at $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests). Correlations of ($r = .35$) have a lower boundary 95% CI of .19, just under the lower threshold for a medium effect (Hemphill, 2003).

Table 2
Descriptive analysis of Schwartz's 10 value types

	SE	TR	CO	BE	UN	SD	ST	HE	AC	PO
<i>M</i>	4.11	3.22	4.14	4.66	4.35	4.61	3.34	4.19	3.70	3.14
<i>SD</i>	0.76	0.93	0.82	0.72	0.79	0.73	0.99	1.01	1.06	1.07
<i>S</i>	0.23	0.33	-0.19	-0.66	-0.06	0.38	0.05	-0.32	-0.05	0.25
<i>K</i>	-0.55	-0.06	0.07	0.72	0.84	-0.29	-0.78	-0.57	-0.83	-0.46
α	0.64	0.54	0.72	0.65	0.78	0.65	0.74	0.83	0.85	0.69

Note. $N = 155$. CO = Conformity; BE = Benevolence; UN = Universalism; SD = Self-direction; ST = Stimulation; HE = Hedonism; AC = Achievement; PO = Power; SE = Security; TR = Tradition.

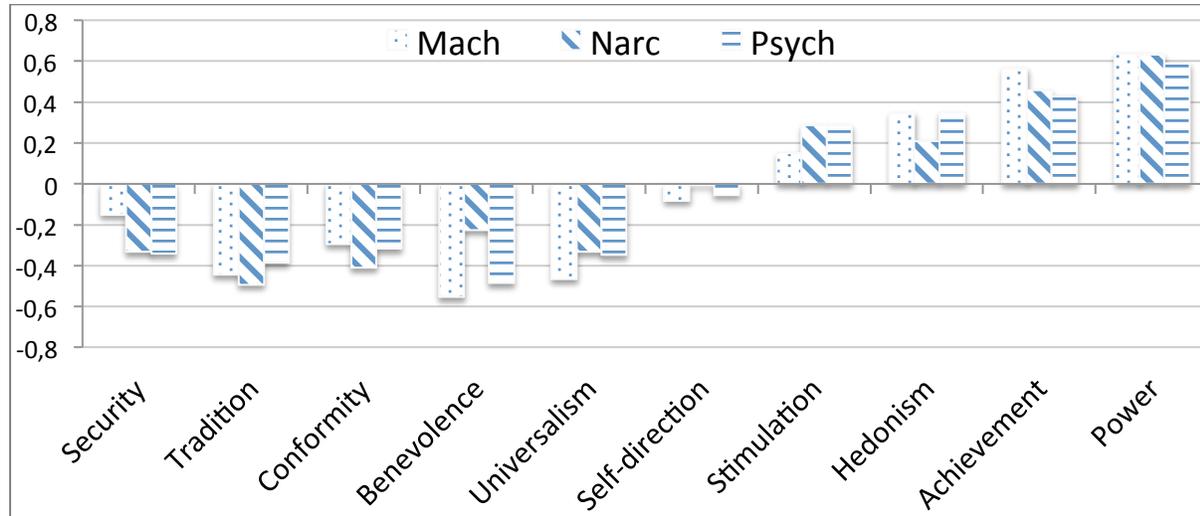


Figure 2. Correlations between Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy and Schwartz's 10 values.

The research aim in this study was to explore Dark Values (the added explained variance on values from the Dark Triad, after controlling for the Big Five). Accordingly, two-step hierarchical regression analyses on the 10 value types are reported in Table 3. The first three columns report percentages of accounted vari-

ance. The results indicate that the Dark Triad accounts for added variance in 7 of the 10 value types, thus confirming the main prediction. These effects are especially evident in the Self-transcendence–Self-enhancement values, but also in the Conservation values. The Dark Triad does not predict Openness values. Furthermore, the beta-coefficients in Table 3 report that Machiavellianism explains 5 of the 10 value types, narcissism 3, and psychopathy only 2.

Table 3

Accounted variance from the Big Five and the Dark Triad on Schwartz values

Value Type	Big Five R^2	Big Five + Dark Triad R^2	ΔR^2	β Mach	β Narc	β Psych
Security	31.4	36.6	5.2*	-.01	-.03	-.30**
Tradition	29.8	43.1	13.3***	-.42***	-.13	-.02
Conformity	31.6	35.6	4.0	-.19	-.12	-.03
Benevolence	42.0	48.7	6.7***	-.19	-.11	-.15
Universalism	25.8	36.1	10.3***	-.26*	-.22*	-.07
Self-direction	37.5	37.6	0.01	.05	.00	.00
Stimulation	36.7	40.1	3.4	.10	.04	.17
Hedonism	17.8	25.1	7.3**	.29*	-.10	.15
Achievement	19.2	42.7	23.5***	.43***	.30**	.10
Power	42.9	64.9	22.0***	.28***	.37***	.19*

Note. All R^2 values are reported in %. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. (two-tailed).

Figure 3 is the summary of the main research question, reporting the percentage of variance accounted for by the Dark Triad, in addition to the Big Five. The circumplex has been slightly modified to straight 90 degree angle diagonals of the two axes, which has proven useful in furthering research on values (Lindeman & Verkasalo, 2005). The Dark Triad demonstrated the most predictive power on Self-enhancement values with over 20% additional variance, followed by Tradition and Universalism with over 10%, and Hedonism, Security and Benevolence showing significant results around 5%.

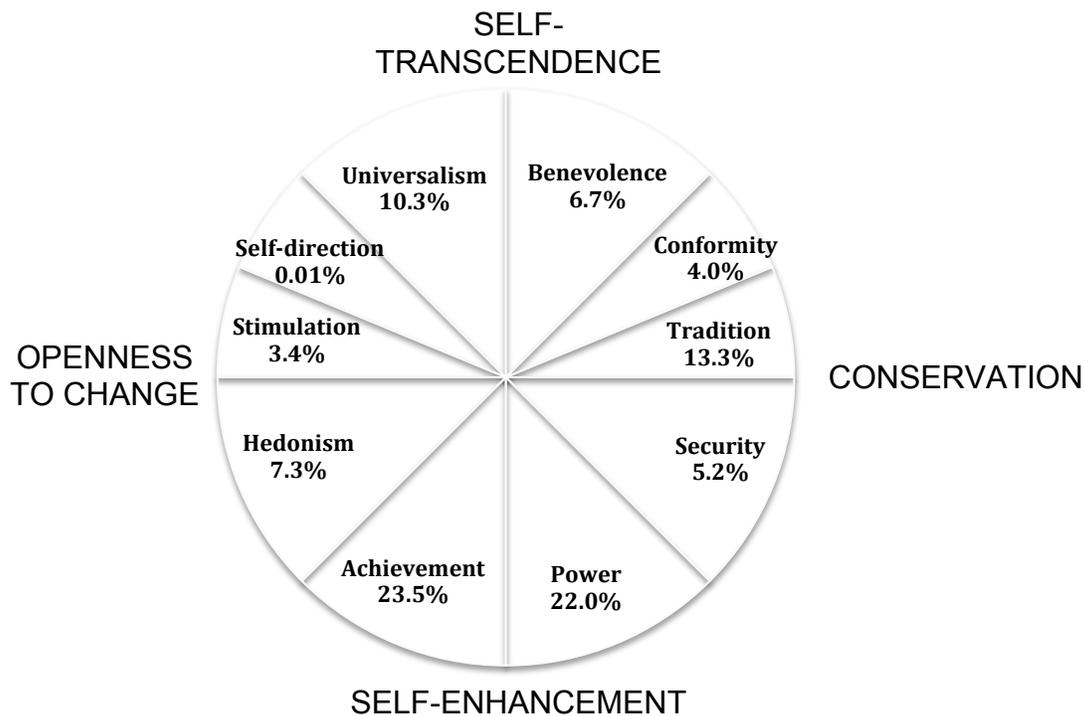


Figure 3. Dark Values. Based on R^2 coefficients from hierarchical regressions, showing the added variance from the Dark Triad on Schwartz's 10 value types (Big Five is controlled for).

Discussion

Our results aligned with previous studies and extend the knowledge of the Dark Triad (Parks-Leduc et al., 2014; Paulhus & Williams, 2002). The Dark Triad correlates with three out of four value dimensions (Self-enhancing, Self-transcending, and Conservation) and adding explanatory variance (10-20%), beyond the Big Five. However, the fourth dimension (Openness to change) showed minimal or no relation to the Dark Triad. Openness to change-items involves mostly non-moral content, potentially explaining the lack of effect (Schwartz, 2007). Tradition, on the other hand, showed particular impact by the Dark Triad (cf. Figure 3). This effect likely exemplifies the high scorer on the Dark Triad: showing disregard for conventions, bordering on anti-social behavior. The study shows that individuals scoring high on the Dark Triad share certain value types.

Traits and values in the components of the Dark Triad

Most of the additional variance in universal values was accounted for by Machiavellianism which indicates that this disposition is not well captured by the Big Five. As seen in Figure 2, a majority of the effects from Machiavellianism reaches the medium threshold of $r = .20$ proposed by Hemphill (2003), while narcissism and psychopathy shows medium effects in less than half of the value types. Behavioral genetics report a strong shared-environment component for Machiavellianism, but not for narcissism and psychopathy (Larsson, Andershed & Lichtenstein, 2006; Vernon, Villani, Vickers & Harris, 2008). Olver and Mooradian (2003) proposed that traits can be separated from values, through the endogenous characteristics of traits (nature) versus the learned adaptations of values (nurture). *Our results suggest that Machiavellianism is highly value-driven, while narcissism and psychopathy are more trait-driven.* On the item-level in the Machiavellianism subscale – which includes hiding secrets, making the most of opportunities, using information for one’s own benefit, and avoiding conflict with others for long-term benefit – a learned world-view is implied. The narcissism scale, on the other hand, measures a person’s perceived interaction with others and one’s own intrinsic self-image. The items concern the influence of the presence of others, people’s opinions, and being at the center of attention; all implying social interaction. Lastly, the psychopathy scale is more based on temperaments – such as being out of control and harboring revenge – which have demonstrated high heritability (Larsson et al., 2006).

Our exploratory analysis implies that the Dark Triad is composed by both trait-like and value-like measurements, thus illuminating the varying relationships with universal values. This could have potential implications in the construct debate (Fossati, Pincus, Borroni, Munteanu, & Maffei, 2014).

Dark Values and morality

The title choice “Dark Values” suggests that Self-enhancing values such as Power and Achievement should perhaps not be considered morally neutral (Arvan, 2013). People generally consider Self-transcending values to contain more morally relevant content than the other dimensions (Schwartz, 2007). Items in the Short Dark Triad are not very flattering: “*I’ll say anything to get what I want*”, “*I can be mean to others*”, “*I like to get revenge on authorities*”, or “*I seek out danger*” and carry moral implications.

The results of our study show that high scorers on the Dark Triad hold values that entail the exclusion of others and the enhancement of oneself. This supports Rauthmann and Will’s (2011) results, who found that persons scoring high on Machiavellianism have low propensity for including others in their work and tend to view others negatively. An application of this could be the difficulty of distinguishing the value types of for instance newly employed or business partners. Us-

ing personality tests such as the Big Five to find people extraordinary low on, for instance, Agreeableness is a start in the prevention of anti-social work behaviors. Twenge, Baumeister, Tice, and Stucke (2001) report effects such as increased aggression, less helpful behavior, less rational and intelligent choices in subjects who are excluded socially. Gaining a better understanding of how individuals with darker personality traits think is one of many aspects in successful cooperation and communication.

Conclusion and future studies

The Dark Triad predicts universal values to a greater extent than the Big Five. The opposite could be construed, called a *White Triad*, which would imply the hypothesized measure of a socially inclusive, caring, and extraordinarily agreeable individual, is not necessarily captured by low scores on the Dark Triad (cf. Crego & Widiger, 2014).

Being that values affect behavior when activated (Verplanken & Holland, 2002), a potentially fruitful line of experimental research opens up: it is unknown to what extent it is possible to manipulate values in highly callous individuals. This is somewhat uncharted territory, and we are encouraged to keep exploring the link between traits and values in ensuing research.

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