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Do You See what I See? How a Dark Triad Personality Affects Perceptions of Dark Triad Characters in Film and Television

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DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE? HOW A DARK TRIAD PERSONALITY AFFECTS
PERCEPTIONS OF DARK TRIAD CHARACTERS IN FILM AND TELEVISION

by
Timothy Davis

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

Oxford
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Approved by

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ABSTRACT

TIMOTHY DAVIS: Do You See What I See? How a Dark Triad Personality Affects Perceptions of Dark Triad Characters in Film and Television.
(Under the direction of Dr. Carrie V. Smith)

The Dark Triad is composed of three related subclinical personality traits: narcissism (excessive self-love, need for attention), psychopathy (cold, remorseless), and Machiavellianism (manipulative, cynical). The present study uses Dark Triad film/television characters to examine how Dark Triad people view others like them. It was hypothesized that (1) participants higher in the Dark Triad are more interested in films/television shows with Dark Triad characters, (2) participants higher in the Dark Triad have a more positive reaction to Dark Triad characters, and (3) Dark Triad participants see themselves in Dark Triad characters. Gender differences in Dark Triad character evaluations were also examined. Participants were shown trailers for films/television shows, most of which featured a Dark Triad character, and asked questions about the films/shows and specific characters. Participants were given a questionnaire that assessed their Dark Triad characteristics. Results showed no significant relationship between Dark Triad scores and interest in films/shows with Dark Triad leads. However, participants higher in the Dark Triad viewed Dark Triad characters more positively than others. Also, Dark Triad participants saw themselves in Dark Triad characters. It was found that the ability of Dark Triad participants to see themselves in these characters mediated the relationship between participants' Dark Triad scores and their reactions to Dark Triad characters. In conclusion, Dark Triad characters

are generally disliked, but this does not affect liking of films/shows featuring them.

However, people higher in the Dark Triad do like these characters more than others, likely because they see the characters as similar to themselves.

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Do You See what I See? How a Dark Triad Personality Affects Perceptions of Dark Triad Characters in Film and Television

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Author's Notes

I would like to thank Dr. Carrie V. Smith for her advising of this study. I would also like to thank Grace Snyder, Brooke Holloway, Kelene Spears, and Robert Williams for their assistance.

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Abstract

The Dark Triad is composed of three related subclinical personality traits: narcissism (excessive self-love, need for attention), psychopathy (cold, remorseless), and Machiavellianism (manipulative, cynical). The present study uses Dark Triad film/television characters to examine how Dark Triad people view others like them. It was hypothesized that (1) participants higher in the Dark Triad are more interested in films/television shows with Dark Triad characters, (2) participants higher in the Dark Triad have a more positive reaction to Dark Triad characters, and (3) Dark Triad participants see themselves in Dark Triad characters. Gender differences in Dark Triad character evaluations were also examined. Participants were shown trailers for films/television shows, most of which featured a Dark Triad character, and asked questions about the films/shows and specific characters. Participants were given a questionnaire that assessed their Dark Triad characteristics. Results showed no significant relationship between Dark Triad scores and interest in films/shows with Dark Triad leads. However, participants higher in the Dark Triad viewed Dark Triad characters more positively than others. Also, Dark Triad participants saw themselves in Dark Triad characters. It was found that the ability of Dark Triad participants to see themselves in these characters mediated the relationship between participants' Dark Triad scores and their reactions to Dark Triad characters. In conclusion, Dark Triad characters are generally disliked, but this does not affect liking of films/shows featuring them. However, people higher in the Dark Triad do like these characters more than others, likely because they see the characters as similar to themselves.

Do You See What I See? How a Dark Triad Personality Affects Perceptions of Dark
Triad Characters in Film and Television

The Dark Triad is a set of three related subclinical personality traits. These traits are narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism. Though the relationship between narcissism and psychopathy has been studied in clinical psychology for some time, the development of subclinical measures of narcissism and psychopathy allowed for examination of the similarities among all three of these traits (Paulhus, Williams, & Harms, 2001). Machiavellianism was included because of positive associations previously found with psychopathy (McHoskey, Worzel, & Szyarto, 1998) and narcissism (McHoskey, 1995).

People high in narcissism possess a need for admiration, excessive self-love and self-admiration, a sense of entitlement, a sense of superiority, and an excessive desire for attention (Jonason, Webster, Schmitt, Li, & Crysel, 2012; Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Subclinical psychopathy is characterized by thrill-seeking, high impulsivity, coldness, and a lack of remorse and conscience. (Hare, 1993; Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Machiavellians tend to be manipulative, cynical, and strategic (Paulhus & Williams, 2002; Rauthmann & Kolar, 2012).

The subclinical nature of the Dark Triad, as well as its consistence of three unique traits, makes it difficult to determine the frequency of Dark Triad people in the general population. The best explanation that has been offered to date is that at least one Dark Triad person can be found in any large group of people (Furnham, Richards, & Paulhus, 2013).

Beginning of Dark Triad

The idea of a common link amongst these three traits emerged with the observation that all three consist of a socially destructive character, emotional coldness, heightened aggression, and acts of self-promotion (Paulhus et al., 2001; Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Also, studies prior to the conception of the Dark Triad showed relationships between Machiavellianism and psychopathy (Fehr, Samson, & Paulhus, 1992; McHoskey et al., 1998), narcissism and psychopathy (Gustafson & Ritzer, 1995), and Machiavellianism and narcissism (McHoskey, 1995).

Paulhus and Williams (2002) conducted an early investigation of the relationship among the three traits. Participants were given anonymous questionnaires including individual self-report measures for each of the traits of the Dark Triad (NPI: narcissism, Mach-IV: Machiavellianism, SRP III: psychopathy). These questionnaires also included a self-report measure for the Big Five (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness). It was found that men scored higher on all Dark Triad traits than women. Within gender, the highest correlation was found between narcissism and psychopathy. The results of this study demonstrated that narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism are intercorrelated. However, there has been disagreement in the psychological community about how the Dark Triad should be evaluated; should the three traits be “lumped” together or addressed separately (Furnham et al., 2013).

Regarding the Big Five traits, narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism were all found to be high in disagreeableness. Narcissism and psychopathy were both found to be high in extraversion and openness, while both psychopathy and

Machiavellianism were found to be low in conscientiousness. Psychopathy scored significantly lower than narcissism and Machiavellianism in neuroticism.

Paulhus and Williams (2002) demonstrated that while there are similarities among the three traits of the Dark Triad, they remain distinct traits and, therefore, must be tested separately. This finding assisted in the formation of measures for the Dark Triad, such as the Dirty Dozen (Jonason & Webster, 2014) and the Short Dark Triad (SD3: Jones & Paulhus, 2014). Both of these measures provide a concise way to measure the Dark Triad and are derived from individual measures for narcissism (NPI), psychopathy (SRP III) and Machiavellianism (Mach-IV: Furnham et al., 2013). The recent creation of the SD3 shows that the possibilities in measuring the Dark Triad are still being researched and that there is still more to learn.

Perceptions of Dark Triad People

Rauthmann and Kolar (2012) examined the Dark Triad by looking at the desirability of having a Dark Triad personality, as well as the consequences it causes for oneself and for others. They claimed that a “dark” trait is characterized as undesirable and beneficial to oneself, but harmful to others. Results showed that narcissism was viewed more positively (less “dark”) than Machiavellianism and psychopathy. Also, people believed all three traits to be more desirable for others than for themselves. However, most people believed that their own behaviors did not harm others as much as when some other person performed the same behaviors. In regards to the present research, this demonstrates that people view the Dark Triad traits differently in themselves than they do in others.

Rauthmann and Kolar (2013) further investigated people's perceptions of each trait. Three fictional people were created for this study. Each person was high in one of the three Dark Triad traits. Each participant was given information about one of the fictional people and asked questions about their perceptions of these people. It was found that all three traits are viewed somewhat negatively. However, the fictional narcissists were judged to be significantly more appealing than the fictional psychopaths and Machiavellians.

Dark Triad in Popular Culture

One indication of how Dark Triad people are perceived is the presence of Dark Triad characters in popular culture. Many popular films, television shows, books, plays, and more feature prominent Dark Triad characters. In many cases, these characters are antagonists of their stories. However, many protagonists possess these traits as well. These characters have become identified by the term "antihero" (Jonason et al., 2012). Statistics from filmsite.org show that many film series featuring "antiheroes" (i.e. Batman, Ironman, James Bond, and Captain Jack Sparrow) are currently represented in the 20 highest grossing films worldwide. Dark Triad "antiheroes" can also be found in numerous television series (e.g. Dr. Gregory House of the Fox medical drama *House*, Dexter Morgan of Showtime's *Dexter*, and Tony Soprano of HBO's *The Sopranos*).

Past research has also proposed that female Dark Triad characters are rare in films and television (Jonason et al., 2012). Though Dark Triad males are more common than Dark Triad females (Furnham et al., 2013), representations of Dark Triad female characters do still exist. The past research has proposed that films featuring Dark Triad females are unlikely to be successful, so they are not made (Jonason et al., 2013). Yet,

films such as *Fatal Attraction*, *Basic Instinct*, *Gone Girl*, and *Mean Girls* do feature Dark Triad women in leading roles and have been highly successful. The Dark Triad characteristics of these women are evident, but perhaps the general population finds it difficult to imagine women such as these in their own lives as they are, by nature of film and popular culture, over exaggerated.

Present Research

Most Dark Triad research has looked at the three traits individually and the relationships between them (Furnham et al., 2013). The present research sought to focus on the Dark Triad as a whole, rather than focusing on narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism individually. Extensive research has been done on how the Dark Triad affects workplace, educational, antisocial, mating, and interpersonal behavior (Furnham et al., 2013). It has been found that Dark Triad people can often utilize their traits to their advantage to achieve leadership positions in the workplace, are likely to cheat in educational settings, and view themselves as socially dominant to others. Psychopaths are distinct from Machiavellians and narcissists because they tend to engage in short-term relationships and are more aggressive and impulsive (Furnham et al., 2013).

Other researchers, such as Rauthmann and Kolar (2012), have looked at how Dark Triad people are viewed by the general population. In contrast, the present research focuses on how Dark Triad people view others like themselves. We sought to better understand Dark Triad people by examining how they respond to these “dark” traits when others are expressing them. Might they admire these people? Or could it possibly invoke jealousy?

Hypotheses

We believed that a Dark Triad person would be more accepting of the Dark Triad traits than a non Dark Triad person, because they seem to be proud of their personalities (a characteristic of narcissism). It also seems reasonable to believe that Dark Triad people would appreciate others like them because they would seem them as more “socially equal” to them than the general population. This led to three hypotheses being tested in the present study. (1) Participants higher in the Dark Triad (scoring higher on the Dirty Dozen) will be more interested in viewing films/television shows with Dark Triad characters, (2) participants higher in the Dark Triad will have more positive reactions to Dark Triad characters, and (3) Dark Triad participants will view Dark Triad characters as similar to themselves. I also sought to examine how the gender of the Dark Triad characters affected participants’ reactions to them.

Method

Pilot Study

Participants

Nineteen female and two male undergraduate students participated in this study. Participants were recruited from two sections of a research methods course. Participants received extra credit in their class as compensation for their participation in the study. An alternative extra credit assignment of equal value was available to students to prevent any pressure to participate in the study.

Materials

The trailers used for this study were taken from YouTube. Numerous films and trailers were viewed in order to find suitable trailers for this study. Thirteen of the

trailers chosen came from films/television shows that researchers believed to have Dark Triad characters in prominent roles. The other six films were used to distract participants from the true purpose of the study. These six films had actors that were also in the other thirteen films/television shows. They were all theatrical trailers that were originally released by the film companies. Therefore, as with all film and television trailers, these trailers were approved for all audiences. Trailers ranged in duration from about one and a half to three minutes. A list of all trailers used, including those used only in the pilot study, can be found in Appendix A.

For each trailer, pictures of characters from the trailers were given. There were two prominent characters from each trailer, resulting in 38 pictures total. All pictures were black and white, equal in size, and located in the same positions throughout the survey. They were selected and formatted to show each of the characters with neutral expressions and from approximately the same distances. These pictures were also chosen because they were deemed by researchers to be reflective of how the characters physically appear in the trailers. Each character was labeled either Character A or Character B.

Each trailer was labeled with the trailer number and name of the film/television show. For each trailer, participants were asked if they had seen said film/television show before. Participants were asked to rate the perceived Dark Triad characteristics of each character, using the Dirty Dozen. The Dirty Dozen (Jonason & Webster, 2010) is a twelve-item self-report measure used to measure Dark Triad personality traits. These twelve items consist of four-item subscales for Machiavellianism (i.e. “*I tend to manipulate others to get my way*”), psychopathy (i.e. “*I tend to lack remorse*”), and

narcissism (i.e. “*I tend to want others to admire me*”). Participants responded to each item using a response scale from 1 to 7 (1=strongly disagree and 7=strongly agree).

Participants were asked to answer these questions “as if you were Character A/B.”

The Dirty Dozen was selected over the Short Dark Triad (SD3) (Jones & Paulhus, 2014) for two reasons. Though both are concise, the Dirty Dozen is shorter, which was important in this study because participants were asked to complete it numerous times. Also, because the SD3 is very new, most past research has used the Dirty Dozen.

Procedure

Upon arrival, participants were given consent letters. They were given adequate time to read these letters, as well as the opportunity to ask questions or voice any concerns. Surveys were distributed once all participants indicated they were consenting to the study.

The trailer for the first film was played on a projector screen. After completion of the trailer, participants were asked to answer all of the questions pertaining to that trailer. The next trailer was not played until all participants indicated they had finished answering the questions. This continued for each of the 19 trailers.

After all trailers had been shown, and all questions had been answered, participants were asked to remain seated. A sign in sheet was passed around to each participant so they could receive their extra credit. Participants were then thanked for their participation and dismissed. No specific measures for debriefing were taken as no deception was used in the study. However, participants were given the opportunity to ask questions.

Present Study

Participants

Participants were 86 (24 males, 58 females, 4 unknown) undergraduates recruited from a variety of psychology classes. The results of two participants were removed: one had also participated in the pilot study, which may have affected their results in the final study, and one failed to indicate that they were of age. Therefore, only the results of 84 participants were recorded.

An announcement was placed on a participant management system to recruit participants. Participants were told that the study would evaluate personality and film/television preference, and that it would take approximately one and a half hours to complete.

Materials

Thirteen trailers were used in the present study. These trailers were selected from the 19 trailers used for the pilot study. The characters and pictures used in the present study were taken from the pilot study. Nine of the thirteen trailers featured Dark Triad characters in prominent roles. Twelve of the characters were determined to be Dark Triad based on their high scores on the Dirty Dozen given by participants from the pilot study.

The trailers were presented in different, random orders each time the study was conducted for the purpose of counterbalancing. These trailer orders were determined prior to the study using an online random number generator. The placement of the personality assessment portion also varied (either before or after all thirteen trailers) in

case seeing the trailers first affected the participants' perceptions of their own Dark Triad characteristics and vice versa.

Trailers were numbered, but the names of the films/television shows were removed. Each survey began with a page asking participants to indicate that they were 18 or older, their gender, and to rank their preference for seven movie genres on a scale of 1 (favorite) to 7 (least favorite): comedy, drama, action/adventure, thriller, horror, musical, and romantic.

For each trailer, participants were asked if they had seen the film/television show (*Yes, in its entirety; Some of it; No, not at all*). They then were asked to rate their interest in seeing the film/television show on a response scale from 1 to 10 (1=*I have no desire to see this movie*; 5=*I would see this movie*; 10=*I really want to see this movie*). Next, they answered a number of questions about two of the characters from each trailer. These questions examined participants' perceptions of the characters by looking at how relatable, appealing, troublesome, and likeable they found these characters, as well as how much the characters reminded participants of themselves and of their friends. All of these questions were on a seven-point scale (1=*not at all*, 7=*very*) and were identical for each character. Inclusion of the reverse-coded "troublesome" question reduced the possibility of acquiescence from participants. Participants were also asked to rate how certain factors (actors, plot, music, and familiarity with the storyline) affected their interest in the films/television shows (1=*not at all*; 7=*very*).

Participants were also given two personality tests within the personality assessment portion of survey; the Dirty Dozen (Jonason, Webster, 2010) and the Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI: Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2001). The Dirty Dozen

is a twelve-item measure of the Dark Triad, and the TIPI is a ten-item measure of the Big Five personality traits. All items for both tests were on a response scale from 1 to 7 (1=strongly disagree and 7=strongly agree).

Procedure

Upon arrival, a researcher passed out consent letters to all participants and allow adequate time for reviewing. Surveys were then passed out. Participants were then asked to complete the first page of the survey. Next, depending on which testing sessions participants attended, they either began trailer viewing or answered the personality questionnaires.

Trailers were shown one at a time. Participants were told not to answer any questions pertaining to a trailer until the entire trailer had been shown. This sequence continued for each of the 13 trailers.

Once all surveys had been completed, participants were told to leave their surveys on their desks and give their name to the principal investigator or a research assistant who was taking attendance. Participants were thanked and dismissed. No specific measures for debriefing were taken as there was no deception in the study. However, participants were given the opportunity to ask questions.

Results

The mean scores for the overall evaluation of each Dark Triad character were evaluated. Related results can be found in Table 1. Results showed that the three characters that received the most positive reactions from participants were the three television characters (Annalise Keating (Viola Davis)- How to Get Away with Murder, Connor Walsh (Jack Falahee)- How to Get Away with Murder, Frank Underwood (Kevin

Spacey)- House of Cards). However, these characters were determined by pilot study participants to be just as Dark Triad as other characters used, so there is no reason to believe that this is due to a lack of Dark Triad characteristics expressed in the trailers.

On average, male Dark Triad characters ($M = 3.31$, $SD = .64$) received more positive feedback from participants than female Dark Triad characters ($M = 2.90$, $SD = .70$). A paired samples t-test was done to evaluate the differences between the overall evaluation scores given to male and female Dark Triad characters. Results showed that male Dark Triad characters were scored significantly more positively than female Dark Triad characters, $t(76) = 6.70$, $p < .001$, $d = .76$. It was also found that evaluations of both male and female Dark Triad characters were individually correlated with participant Dark Triad scores (Table 2).

Participants' scores on the Dirty Dozen were averaged to obtain their Dark Triad score as well as their scores for each of the three subscales. Results showed significant intercorrelations amongst narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism, which can be seen in Table 3. Therefore, further discussion of relevant results will focus on overall Dark Triad scores, but subscale scores can be found in the tables.

A bivariate correlation was used to test the hypothesis that participants higher in Dark Triad (scoring higher on the Dirty Dozen) would be more interested in viewing films/television shows with prominent Dark Triad characters. This variable was calculated by averaging the scores participants gave to the question "*considering what you saw in this trailer, how much do you want to see this movie?*" for the nine films/television shows that featured prominent Dark Triad characters. The scores for these film/television shows were averaged together, rather than analyzed individually, to

control for any sort of biases that may have existed toward any individual film/show (i.e. age of the film, time period, etc.). Four movies were not included in this calculation as they had no Dark Triad characters. Results of this analysis were not significant, $r(75) = .12$, n.s.

An overall evaluation variable was calculated for each of the twelve Dark Triad characters. For this variable, an average was taken of how relatable, appealing, likeable, and reverse-scored troublesome participants rated the Dark Triad characters to be. These overall evaluations were then averaged for each of the twelve characters (DT Character Evaluation).

It was hypothesized that participants higher in Dark Triad would have a more positive reaction to Dark Triad characters. As hypothesized, Dark Triad scores were significantly and positively related to overall evaluations of the Dark Triad characters, $r(75) = .33$, $p < .01$.

A bivariate correlation was used to test the hypothesis that Dark Triad participants would be able to see themselves in these Dark Triad characters. The correlation between participants' Dark Triad scores and their responses to the question "*how much does this character remind you of yourself?*" for each of the Dark Triad characters was examined. Results showed a significant positive relationship, $r(79) = .58$, $p < .01$. A bivariate correlation between participants' Dark Triad scores and their response to the question "*How much does this character remind you of your friends?*" for each of the Dark Triad characters also produced a significant positive correlation, $r(81) = .32$, $p < .01$.

After finding that Dark Triad people have a more positive reaction to, as well as see themselves in other Dark Triad people, the relationship was further explored. It was

hypothesized that the reason that participants scoring higher in Dark Triad had a more positive reaction to Dark Triad characters was because they believed the Dark Triad characters to be similar to themselves. This hypothesis was tested using a mediation.

It was found that the relationship between participants' own Dark Triad scores and their overall evaluations of Dark Triad characters was mediated by how like themselves participants determined the Dark Triad characters to be. Figure 1 shows that the standardized regression coefficient between Dark Triad and Dark Triad Like Yourself was statistically significant, as was the standardized regression coefficient between Dark Triad Like Yourself and Dark Triad Character Evaluations. The standardized indirect effect was determined to be .017 ($=.035 \times .485$). The significance of this indirect effect was tested using bootstrapping procedures. Unstandardized indirect effects were computed for each of the 10,000 bootstrapped samples. The 95% confidence interval was computed by determining the indirect effects at the 2.5 and 97.5 percentiles. Results ranged from .01 to .03. Therefore, the indirect effect was statistically significant, meaning that Dark Triad participants' characteristics influenced them to see Dark Triad characters as similar to themselves, which allowed a positive reaction to the Dark Triad characters.

Discussion

The second and third hypotheses were supported by the results. However, the first hypothesis was not. Participants gave Dark Triad characters relatively low overall evaluation scores. However, it was found that the more Dark Triad a person is, the more positive response they have to other Dark Triad characters. Results also showed that Dark Triad people are more likely to see themselves in Dark Triad characters. That is,

they recognize their own Dark Triad characteristics and consider characters determined to be high in Dark Triad to be like them.

The ability of Dark Triad participants to see Dark Triad characters as similar to themselves was shown to be a mediator between Dark Triad (Dirty Dozen) scores and overall reactions to Dark Triad characters. This proposes that a person's own Dark Triad characteristics influences their ability to see other Dark Triad people as similar to themselves, which in turn influences their reaction to Dark Triad people. Therefore, it can be inferred that one reason that people higher in Dark Triad have a more positive reaction to Dark Triad characters is because they see themselves in these characters.

The statistically insignificant results concerning the relationship between Dark Triad scores and interest in films/shows with Dark Triad characters provides some insight into the popularity of films and television shows with Dark Triad leads. Although only people higher in Dark Triad seemed to like the Dark Triad characters at all, many people were still interested in films and television shows with Dark Triad characters, regardless of their dislike of the characters themselves. This shows that people can still enjoy a film or television show as a whole, despite not caring for certain character(s) in it. No explanation for this can be offered with certainty. Perhaps the reason for the interest in films and television shows with Dark Triad characters is coincidental (i.e. we are drawn to superhero movies because of the fantastical aspects and do not actually care about the personalities of the superheroes). Or maybe people are drawn to other personality traits (intelligence, humor, etc.) that are often shown in these Dark Triad characters, and actually dislike their Dark Triad characteristics. However, it seems unlikely that the

existence of Dark Triad leads in so many popular films and television shows is completely coincidental.

On average, participants had a significantly more positive reaction to male Dark Triad characters than to female Dark Triad characters. However, it should be noted that the large difference in the number of male and female participants for this study may have affected this finding. This may demonstrate society's views of women and what is "socially acceptable." Also, this may explain the belief that Dark Triad females are rare in popular culture (Jonason et al., 2013). Perhaps viewers do not necessarily see these women as Dark Triad because they are attributing their Dark Triad characteristics to stereotypical roles for female characters (i.e. a "strong woman" or a "mean girl").

Certain limitations did exist for this study. The Dirty Dozen is a self-report measure, so all measures of participant Dark Triad traits are subjective and based on their own opinions of themselves. Participants may feel inclined to answer in ways they believe to be more socially desirable, which would lower Dark Triad scores. Also, as the Dark Triad is a relatively new concept, there is still much to be learned about it.

Due to time constraints, participants were only shown trailers rather than being shown films and television shows in their entirety. Therefore, participants may not have understood the characters as well as possible. For example, this may partially explain why significant results were not found for the correlation between Dark Triad and participants' interest in films/television shows with Dark Triad leads. Another limitation is that the study required participants to answer the same questions a large number of times. It is possible that participants may have tired from this repetition, which may have affected their answers.

Many participants failed to answer all questions. This explains the varying N values seen throughout the results and tables. It also shows that it is likely that participants made mistakes in some of their other responses.

There are a number of future directions for this topic. An archival study could be done to evaluate the popularity (i.e. box office records, awards, tracking DVD sales, etc.) of films with Dark Triad lead characters. Researchers could explore how the prevalence and popularity of these films have changed over time. This could also be done for television shows by examining viewer numbers. This might offer an explanation as to why people are interested in these films and television shows despite not liking Dark Triad characters.

A study could also focus on the types of people that Dark Triad people choose to surround themselves with. Are most of their friends very similar to them? Does their Machiavellian side inspire them to prefer people they can control? Do they simply seek people that admire them because of their narcissism?

In conclusion, Dark Triad people view other Dark Triad people more positively than others do. This is likely because they see the similarities between themselves and other Dark Triad people. As Dark Triad people have excessive self-love (narcissism), it would follow that they like others they perceive to be similar to themselves. However, Dark Triad traits are generally disliked. Despite this, people seem to enjoy films and television shows that portray Dark Triad characters.

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Table 1 *Mean Values, Standard Deviations, and Maximum and Minimums for Participant Overall Evaluations of Dark Triad Characters*

	Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Min	Max	M	SD
Male DT Characters					
Connor Walsh (Jack Falahee)- How to Get Away with Murder	83	1.00	6.25	3.71	1.20
Frank Underwood (Kevin Spacey)- House of Cards	84	1.25	6.75	3.94	1.16
Gordon Gecko (Michael Douglas)- Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps	82	1.00	5.50	2.94	1.06
Peter Burton (John Cusack)- True Colors	84	1.00	5.75	3.09	1.08
Sebastian Valmont (Ryan Philippe)- Cruel Intentions	82	1.00	5.75	3.14	1.10
Vicomte de Valmont (John Malkovich)- Dangerous Liaisons	84	1.00	5.00	3.01	.94
Female DT Characters					
Annalise Keating (Viola Davis)- How to Get Away with Murder	84	1.00	6.50	3.51	1.19
Kathryn Merteuil (Sarah Michelle Gellar)- Cruel Intentions	84	1.00	4.75	2.52	1.01
Marquise de Merteuil (Glenn Close)- Dangerous Liaisons	83	1.00	5.50	2.81	1.13
Mavis Gary (Charlize Theron)- Young Adult	84	1.00	6.25	3.33	1.24
Meredith Johnson (Demi Moore)- Disclosure	83	1.00	5.00	2.33	1.00
Suzanne Stone (Nicole Kidman)- To Die For	83	1.00	6.00	2.95	.92
All Characters					
DT Character Evaluations	77	1.58	4.48	3.11	.63
Overall Evaluation- Male DT	79	1.88	5.04	3.31	.64
Overall Evaluation- Female DT	81	1.29	4.46	2.90	.70
Valid N (listwise)	77				

Note. minimum=1, maximum=7.

Table 2 *Correlation Between Dark Triad Traits and Overall Evaluations of Male and Female Dark Triad Characters Separately*

	N	Pearson Correlation			
		Dark Triad	Machiavellianism	Psychopathy	Narcissism
Male Overall Evaluation	79	.32**	.26*	.27*	.25*
Female Overall Evaluation	81	.26*	.23*	.22*	.19

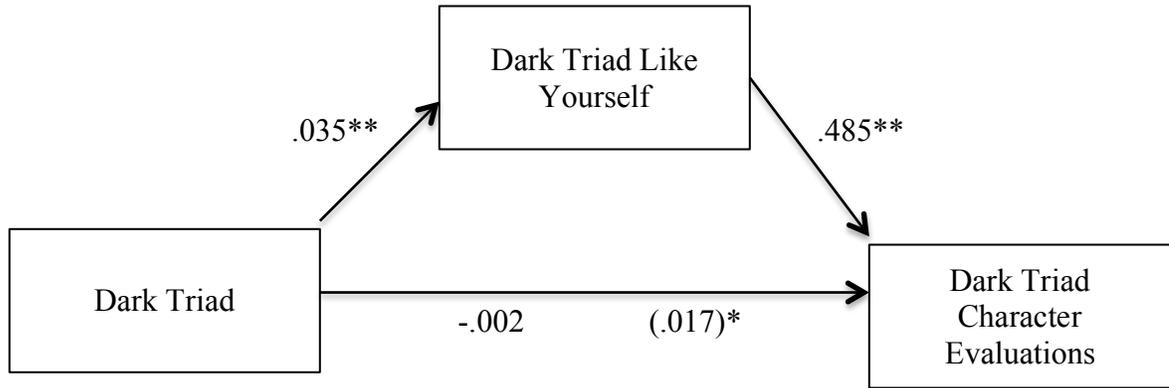
Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$

Table 3 *Correlations Between Dark Triad Traits and Interest in Dark Triad Films/Television Shows, Overall Evaluations, and Like Yourself*

	Pearson Correlation (N)			
	Dark Triad	Machiavellianism	Psychopathy	Narcissism
Dark Triad	-	-	-	-
Machiavellianism	.85(84)**	-	-	-
Psychopathy	.80(84)**	.62(84)**	-	-
Narcissism	.78(84)**	.47(84)**	.37(84)**	-
Interest in DT Film/Show	.12(77)	.10(77)	.04(77)	.14(77)
DT Character Evaluation	.33(77)**	.27(77)*	.28(77)*	.24(77)*
Like Yourself	.58(81)**	.58(81)**	.36(81)**	.46(81)**

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Figure 1 Mediation of Dark Triad Like Yourself Between Dark Triad and Overall Evaluation of Dark Triad Characters



Note. $*p < .05$. $**p < .01$.

Appendix

Appendix A: Films and Television Show Names and Distributors

Films with Dark Triad Characters

1. <i>Cruel Intentions</i> (1999)	Columbia Pictures
2. <i>Dangerous Liaisons</i> (1988)	Warner Bros. Pictures
3. <i>Disclosure</i> (1994)	Warner Bros. Pictures
4. <i>House of Cards</i> (2013-)	Netflix
5. <i>How to Get Away with Murder</i> (2014-)	Disney-ABC Domestic Television
6. <i>To Die For</i> (1995)	Columbia Pictures
7. <i>True Colors</i> (1991)	Paramount Pictures
8. <i>Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps</i> (2010)	20 th Century Fox
9. <i>Young Adult</i> (2011)	Paramount Pictures

Control Films

10. <i>Being John Malkovich</i> (1999)	USA Films
11. <i>Cold Mountain</i> (2003)	Miramax Films
12. <i>I Know What You Did Last Summer</i> (1997)	Columbia Pictures
13. <i>Morning Glory</i> (2010)	Paramount Pictures

Films Used Only in Pilot Study

14. <i>Chicago</i> (2002)	Miramax Films
15. <i>Doubt</i> (2008)	Miramax Films
16. <i>Her</i> (2013)	Warner Bros. Pictures
17. <i>Moulin Rouge</i> (2001)	20 th Century Fox
18. <i>Sherlock Holmes</i> (2009)	Warner Bros. Pictures
19. <i>The Social Network</i> (2010)	Columbia Pictures
