

**The Dark Triad Returns:
Entertainment Preferences and Anti-Social Behavior
Among Narcissists, Machiavellians, and Psychopaths**

Kevin Williams, Alison McAndrew, Tara Learn,

Peter Harms, and Delroy L. Paulhus

University of British Columbia

Poster presented at the 109th annual meeting of the American Psychological
Association,

San Francisco, 2001

ABSTRACT

This study was designed to examine the relationship between three personality types (narcissism, psychopathy, and machiavellianism), entertainment preferences, and anti-social behavior in an undergraduate sample (N = 356). Results showed that psychopaths engaged in the greatest amount of delinquent behavior. Psychopathy also correlated with a liking of anti-social media of various kinds: aggressive films, violent sports, internet pornography, internet hacking, and violent videogames. This entertainment preference trend was similar but weaker for machiavellians whereas narcissism correlated only with a liking of violent sports. There was a link between anti-social entertainment preferences and self-reported anti-social behavior. Furthermore, psychopathy moderated the apparent impact of violent sports activity on anti-social behavior: Playing and watching violent sports led to higher reported anti-social behavior only in psychopaths.

PARTICIPANTS AND METHOD

Participants included 356 students (133 male, 218 female, 5 no response) attending a second-year undergraduate psychology course at a major Canadian university. The study was advertised as a “Personality and Entertainment study”, with participation being rewarded by one bonus credit towards their final class grade. Students were given the opportunity to take a questionnaire package to complete on their own time and return it to a later class or to a designated drop-off location at the school. To ensure anonymity, participants were instructed to not put their name, student number, or any other personal information anywhere on the questionnaire sheets or on the outside envelope. After handing in the questionnaire, students put their name and student number on a separate sheet of paper to receive their bonus credit.

MATERIALS

Personality measures. Participants completed three self-report personality questionnaires. The Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Hall, 1979) consists of 40 items presented in a forced-choice format. It was designed to capture a normal version of the clinical narcissist syndrome, which includes grandiosity, entitlement, self-promotion, other-derogation, attention- and authority-seeking. Example items include “My body is nothing special vs. I like to look at my body” and “I am more capable than other people vs. There is a lot that I can learn from other people”.

The Mach-IV (Christie & Geis, 1970) is a 20-item inventory designed to measure Machiavellianism, the tendency to manipulate others with little regard for others’ well-being. Participants respond to belief statements on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) scale. Some items include “Anyone who completely trusts others is asking for trouble” and “It is wise to flatter important people”.

An abbreviated 31-item version of the Self-Report Psychopathy Scale (SRP-II)(Hare, 1985), was used to measure psychopathy. The measure was based on earlier work by Hare (1980). The items can be divided into two factors, Unemotionality and Anti-Social Deviance. Factor 1 measures personality characteristics such as low empathy and low anxiety, while Factor 2 represents more behavioral aspects of psychopathy such as impulsivity and thrill-seeking behavior. Participants respond to items such as “Rules are made to be broken” and “It is sometimes fun to see how far you can push someone before they catch on”, on a 1 (disagree strongly) to 5 (agree strongly) scale.

Entertainment preferences. We developed a questionnaire asking participants to describe their preferences for a broad variety of media and entertainment. In the first section, students were presented with several types of musical genres accompanied by various artists who exemplified the genre. An “other” option was also available. Participants were asked “What type(s) of music do you enjoy?”, and allowed to respond to more than one option. This resulted in a group of scores (0 or 1) for each subject. Similar sections followed, involving movies, sports-playing, sports-watching, internet activities, and video games. In the case of internet activities, participants were asked to state how many hours a week they spent engaged in each activity. These scores were then divided over the number of hours they spent on the internet in total to obtain relative scores.

Anti-Social Behavior. The anti-social behavior inventory used in this study contained 43 items based on the work of Elliott and Ageton (1980). Participants were asked to estimate how many times in the past five years they had committed each of the anti-social acts. Items ranged from “Beeped in anger at other drivers”, “Bought alcohol for a minor”, and “Cheated on a school test” to “Stolen a motor vehicle”, “Attacked someone with the intent of seriously hurting or killing them”, “Forced someone to have sex against their will”, and “Been arrested”. There were 9 additional items involving various types of drug use (e.g., alcohol, ecstasy, marijuana, etc.). Where necessary, each item distribution was then normalized.

RESULTS

The alpha reliabilities for the NPI, SRP-II, and the Mach-IV were .85, .81, and .74, respectively. Mean scores for the three inventories were 1.36, 2.53, and 2.85, respectively. Intercorrelations of the three personality types are displayed in Figure 1. They show some overlap but not enough to consider them as identical constructs.

FACTOR ANALYSES

Factors of Entertainment. A principal components factor analysis with direct oblimin rotation was performed on the various categories of entertainment. Analysis of the scree plots suggested a two-factor solution for all categories. The factors created are summarized below, with examples of strong loadings for each:

Music: -Rock (Rock, Alternative, Oldies)

-Pop (Pop, Adult Contemporary)

Films: -Aggressive (Action, Adult, Horror)

-Prosocial (Romance, Family, Drama)

Sports: -Violent (Hockey, Football, Wrestling)

-Non-Violent (Figure Skating, Skiing, Track & Field)

Internet: -Social (Instant Messaging, Chat Rooms)

-Anti-Social (Hacking, Pornography)

Video Games: -Violent (War Simulation, First-Person Shooter, Action)

-Novice (Card Games, Puzzle Games, Adventure Games)

Factors of Anti-Social Behavior. A factor analysis was performed on the anti-social behavior inventory, producing an interpretable five-factor solution:

- Bullying (bullying, harassing, ridiculing)
- Serious Crime (stealing a motor vehicle, violent assault, sexual assault)
- Drugs (public drunkenness, excessive consumption of alcohol and other drugs)
- Minor Crime (shoplifting, cheating on a school test, plagiarism)
- Anti-Authority (verbally assaulting parents and other authority figures, parking illegally)

Each participant's five factor scores were added to create a total anti-social behavior score.

CORRELATIONAL ANALYSES AND ANOVA

Personality and Anti-Social Behavior. For analyses involving personality and anti-social behavior, four items from the SRP-II were removed to control any artifactual inflation of correlation scores. Results are displayed in Table 1. Of the three personality types, total anti-social behavior correlated most strongly with psychopathy ($r = .47$), followed by narcissism ($r = .32$) and machiavellianism ($r = .26$). Additionally, anti-social behavior correlated more highly with psychopathy Factor 2 than with Factor 1.

Personality and Factors of Anti-Social Behavior. Psychopathy correlated from .19 - .38 with the five factors of anti-social behavior. Across the board, Factor 2 appeared to play a bigger role in these correlations. Narcissism correlated .12 to .28 with the five factors but Machiavellianism correlated only with minor crime and bullying.

Personality and Entertainment. Correlations discussed in this section are displayed in Table 2. Psychopathy correlated significantly with several anti-social entertainment factors, including aggressive films, violent sports (both playing and watching), violent video games, anti-social internet activities, and to a lesser degree, social internet usage. Psychopathy also showed significant negative correlations with pop music, prosocial films, and watching non-violent sports. In most cases, psychopathy Factor 2 correlations were stronger than Factor 1 for these entertainment preferences. Machiavellianism correlated significantly with aggressive films and both types of internet usage, as well as negatively with prosocial films and non-violent sports (both playing and watching). Significant correlations with narcissism occurred for the playing and watching violent sports categories.

Entertainment and Anti-Social Behavior. The correlations discussed in this section are displayed in Table 3. Total anti-social behavior correlated with aggressive film watching, anti-social internet usage, violent sports (both playing and watching), and to a lesser extent, rock music.

ANOVA analyses were conducted to explore the possibility of an interaction between any of these entertainment preferences and the three personality types in predicting total misbehavior. Median splits were performed to create the necessary groups. Results showed that watching violent sports resulted in an increase in general anti-social behavior for individuals with higher psychopathy scores only ($F(1, 286) = 5.38, p < .05$). A similar interaction occurred for playing violent sports, but only for Factor 2 of psychopathy ($F(1, 286) = 6.89, p < .01$). These findings are illustrated in Figure 2 and Figure 3, respectively.

REFERENCES

- Christie, R., & Geis, F. L. (1970). *Studies in Machiavellianism*. New York: Academic Press.
- Elliott, D.S., & Ageton, S. S. (1980). Reconciling race and class differences in self-reported and official estimates of delinquency. *American Sociological Review*, 45, 95-110.
- Hare, R. D. (1980). A research scale for the assessment of psychopathy in criminal populations. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 1, 111-117.
- Hare, R. D. (1985). Comparison of procedures for the assessment of psychopathy. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 53, 7-16.
- Raskin, R., & Hall, C.S. (1979). A Narcissistic Personality Inventory. *Psychological Reports*, 45, 590.

TABLE 1

Correlations Between Personality Types and Anti-Social Behavior

	Self-Reported Psychopathy				
	Narcissism	Total	Factor 1	Factor 2	Machiavellianism
Bullying	.19	.35	.11	.35	.24
Serious Crime	.12	.19	.06	.19	.05
Drugs	.28	.35	.21	.35	.06
Minor Crime	.18	.34	.08	.38	.38
Anti-Authority	.21	.20	.09	.24	.08
Total Anti-Social Behavior	.32	.47	.18	.49	.26

Correlations over .17 are significant at the .01 level, two-tailed.

Correlations over .11 are significant at the .05 level, two-tailed.

N = 287.

TABLE 2

Correlations Between Personality Types and Entertainment Preferences

	Self-Reported Psychopathy				
	Narcissism	Total	Factor 1	Factor 2	Machiavellianism
Rock Music	.03	.09	.06	.12	-.09
Pop Music	-.09	-.17	-.16	-.11	-.01
Aggressive Films	.10	.32	.14	.29	.18
Prosocial Films	-.03	-.14	-.11	-.06	-.14
Play Violent Sports	.20	.32	.18	.29	.02
Play Non-Violent Sports	.07	.06	.02	.10	-.15
Watch Violent Sports	.12	.30	.11	.30	.03
Watch Non-Violent Sports	.00	-.14	-.13	-.07	-.15
Social Internet	.10	.13	.03	.12	.19
Anti-Social Internet	.04	.15	-.02	.21	.20
Violent Video Games	.03	.18	.08	.15	.10
Novice Video Games	-.03	-.05	.06	-.07	-.04

N = 351. Correlations above .13 significant at the .01 level, two-tailed.

Correlations above .10 significant at the .05 level, two-tailed.

TABLE 3

Correlations Between Anti-Social Behavior and Entertainment Preferences

	Bullying	Serious Crime	Drugs	Minor Crime	Anti- Authority	Total Anti-Social Behavior
Rock Music	.04	-.05	.28	.04	.10	.13
Pop Music	-.01	.05	-.21	-.02	.10	-.03
Aggressive Films	.18	.02	.09	.18	.10	.19
Prosocial Films	-.10	-.06	-.02	-.12	.00	-.10
Play Violent Sports	.20	.11	.15	.18	.14	.26
Play Non-Violent Sports	-.03	.11	.21	-.05	.10	.11
Watch Violent Sports	.18	.10	.14	.12	.11	.21
Watch Non- Violent Sports	-.08	-.07	.06	-.12	.02	-.06
Social Internet	.04	-.02	-.19	.07	.02	-.03
Anti-Social Internet	.12	.00	.19	.16	.18	.21
Violent Video Games	.04	.01	-.05	.14	.04	.06
Novice Video Games	-.06	-.17	.08	-.08	-.06	-.10

Correlations over .17 are significant at the .01 level, two-tailed.

Correlations over .11 are significant at the .05 level, two-tailed.

N = 287.