**The Dark Triad:**

**Examining Judgement Accuracy, the Role of Vulnerability, and Linguistic Style in Interpersonal Perception**

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**Abstract**

The Dark Triad constructs – Machiavellianism, psychopathy, narcissism – are typically associated with socially aversive behaviours, including insensitivity and exploitation. Despite this, individuals high in Dark Triad traits can be successful and popular outside of clinical and forensic contexts. Research suggests that individuals susceptible to exploitation possess traits signalling vulnerability, and Dark Triad individuals are adept at identifying these when choosing victims. Language is also known to reveal traces of Dark Triad characteristics. This project examined patterns of interpersonal perception among Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism, with the aim to highlight similarities and differences across the three traits. Three studies explored these traits and the ways they manifest in social contexts.

Study 1 investigated the extent to which perceptions of individuals high in Dark Triad traits accurately correspond to personality, emotional attributes, and vulnerability within their targets for manipulation. The cues they use for their judgements were considered. Participants who completed Dark Triad measures watched four video clips of dyadic interactions. Results indicated that Dark Triad individuals demonstrated a negative–other bias, whereby they generally perceived all targets as being vulnerable.

Study 2 examined the characteristics of individuals who seemingly condone and abet Dark Triad individuals. Results showed that predictors of vulnerability included low extraversion, low conscientiousness, high neuroticism, and high agreeableness. The vignette method was used to elicit perceptions towards Dark Triad behaviours. Response styles on Likert-type statements and open-ended questions between high and low vulnerability groups differed significantly; the less vulnerable were more derogatory whereas the more vulnerable were less harsh.

Study 3 qualitatively assessed language as a marker of Dark Triad traits using text analysis. Case studies of individuals high on the Dark Triad scales revealed that their linguistic patterns were consistent with their respective theoretical conceptions.

This mixed methods research established that the Dark Triad traits do not uniformly entail the same behavioural outcomes. It also highlighted the importance of the interactive context between the destructive and the susceptible, through which researchers can devise strategies to help organisations better manage such individuals.

**Dedication**

To my Father

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**Declaration**

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own independent work and has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Any published material associated with this work is explicitly indicated and is included with this thesis.

Kai Li Chung
13<sup>th</sup> October 2017

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**Preface**

<p style="text-align:center">**Background**</p>

The 'Dark Triad' is a concept derived by Paulhus and Williams (2002) used to collectively describe three personality traits – *Machiavellianism*, *psychopathy*, and *narcissism* – all of which have traditionally been considered to be socially aversive (Kowalski, 2001). In short, Machiavellianism is characterised by duplicity and a cynical disregard for morality (Christie & Geis, 1970), psychopathy is associated with antisocial tendencies, callousness, and erratic lifestyle (Hare, 2003), and narcissism refers to an exaggerated sense of self-importance, marked by entitlement and a tendency towards interpersonal exploitation (Raskin & Terry, 1988). Underlying these personality traits are behaviours associated with self-centredness, callousness, manipulation, and coercion. Especially within the fields of psychiatry or law enforcement, clinical levels of these traits are usually treated as pathological, are seen to cause significant impairments in self and interpersonal functioning, and as requiring treatment.

However, as with other personality dimensions, the Dark Triad is a set of overarching traits that everyone has to a greater or lesser degree. The "everyday" or subclinical versions of the Dark Triad traits can be found in community samples, where high levels can be observed among people who are able to maintain normal daily functioning. These traits may even be desirable under some circumstances. For example, company shareholders value leaders with such traits as they are capable of performing radical changes successfully during turbulent times, such as "retrenching" company employees without feeling stressed (van Vugt & Ahuja, 2010). It has been argued that these traits serve important adaptive functions such as facilitating behaviour associated with goal attainment, particularly when the goals involve exploitative social strategies (Jonason, Li, & Buss, 2010; Jonason, Li, Webster, & Schmitt, 2009; Jonason & Webster, 2012).

The Dark Triad as a construct gained popularity and has now, according to Google Scholar, been cited over 2000 times in both theoretical and empirical literature since the introduction of the concept in 2002. The concepts of the three traits were historically developed independently from one another: psychopathy was derived mainly from the forensic and clinical literature, narcissism was drawn largely from psychoanalytic theories, and Machiavellianism was first discussed

within political philosophy. Although it is argued that the Dark Triad consists of three theoretically separable personality constructs, there has been empirical evidence that the three traits share common underlying factors, such as low agreeableness and callousness (e.g., Jakobwitz & Egan, 2006; Jones & Figueredo, 2013). Due to their conceptual resemblance and empirical overlap, there have been controversies (perhaps even confusion) around the conceptualisation of the construct. A key debate in the field is whether to assume the Dark Triad to be a single concept or distinct traits.

Paulhus (2014) explained the importance of studying the Dark Triad traits simultaneously to avoid the phenomenon of *construct creep* (Haslam, 2016), which is the tendency for researchers who are focused solely on a single psychological construct, to continually expand its meaning without taking into account the other related, but perhaps distinct, concepts. In other words, the concept of each Dark Triad trait may be continually stretched so far that all three constructs end up encompassing a broad range of phenomena, producing substantial semantic overlap among all three traits. The paradox here is, that the way in which one understands and studies these abstract ideas is influenced by how they are operationally defined and researched.

Bearing the above in mind, this thesis revolves around two main arguments. The discussions of the three single studies conducted in the current mixed method research project aim to exemplify these two points. The first argument pertains to a more fundamental notion that despite overlaps, the three Dark Triad traits are manifested differently in social settings, and this notion underpins the discussion throughout the thesis. As the distinction between each Dark Triad trait has practical consequences, it is important to assess the similarities and differences among the traits.

The second point focuses on the importance of the context in which interactions occur and Dark Triad personalities unfold. Whilst examining the Dark Triad and the behavioural outcomes associated with each trait, it is evident that people with high levels of the Dark Triad often engage in interpersonal manipulation. Nonetheless, manipulative behaviours do not operate in isolation; the individuals who may be passively or actively involved in contexts where manipulation occurs play a major role. In view of this, it is likely that a person high in Dark Triad traits may prey on those who may unwittingly 'enable' their aversive

behaviour. Taken together, these ideas raise the question of whether people high on the Dark Triad measures seek out specific individuals who may possess tell-tale traits of being more vulnerable to victimisation. If so, it is of interest to investigate whether people high in Dark Triad traits possess an enhanced ability to evaluate personality traits and emotional states predictive of vulnerability in others, enabling them to perpetrate various types of aversive interpersonal behaviours. It is also important to consider which individuals are prone to falling victim to those high in Dark Triad traits, and why they are more susceptible to such interpersonal exploitation. Through an understanding of the interpersonal perception between the "manipulator" and the "victim", it is hoped that new insights into the dynamics of social manipulation can be gained.

It is important to make clear at the outset of this thesis that the terms "dark personalities", "Dark Triad individuals", "Machiavellians", "psychopaths", and "narcissism" are not used as diagnostic labels to imply pathology, but as convenient shorthands to refer to individuals scoring highly (relative to others in the sample or population) on respective personality dimensions.

**Thesis Outline**

This thesis is structured as follows:

In Chapter 1, a brief history and the theoretical background of each Dark Triad trait is first addressed individually, followed by an overview of the Dark Triad construct with respect to its biological and environmental origins, models of personality, gender, and person-related outcome variables such as political leadership, workplace behaviour, and intimate relationships. Chapter 1 also covers a brief literature review on characteristics predictive of vulnerability to victimisation, drawing upon examples identified by research on peer harassment and violent victimisation. A general overview of whether Dark Triad individuals are adept at assessing traits associated with vulnerability in others and how they make such assessments is provided. The way in which the Dark Triad is manifested in language is also briefly discussed. Chapter 1 provides context and lays a foundation for the individual studies that were carried out in this research project, which are presented in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

Chapter 2 aims to evaluate some of the measurements used in the assessment of each Dark Triad trait and highlight key issues that may impede one's

understanding of these traits. This chapter outlines the rationale for the variables and measures used in the current research project. A summary of each of the three studies is presented.

Chapter 3 describes the initial phase where participant recruitment took place. Preliminary data is presented in this chapter.

Chapter 4 presents the first study of the current project. Study 1 explores the ways in which people high in Dark Triad traits assess others, and how accurate they are in such assessments.

Chapter 5 discusses the second study. Study 2 examines the characteristics of individuals who are susceptible to being manipulated by individuals high on the Dark Triad measures.

Chapter 6 presents the third study. Study 3 uses a case study approach to qualitatively investigate the features of personal narratives provided by people on the high end of the Dark Triad spectrum.

Finally, Chapter 7 provides a general discussion of the three studies that were conducted. The limitations and implications of the current project, and directions for future research are also outline in the final chapter.

**Chapter 1:    Introduction**

**The Dark Triad**

**Machiavellianism**

The term 'Machiavellianism' is derived from Niccolò Machiavelli, a Florentine diplomat who wrote the book, *The Prince*, among other works.  In his commentary, Machiavelli (1532/1998) introduced a code of conduct that operates independent of ethics, disregarding conventional morality, and adopting manipulative impersonal strategies in order to maintain political influence.  The gist of Machiavelli's treatise is commonly encapsulated in the saying, "the end justifies the means".  Ever since, the term has come to designate the use of guile and deceit in interpersonal relations.  These descriptions, commonly used in psychology, portray people high in Machiavellianism to be opportunists who focus exclusively on their own goals and agenda, and take a certain pleasure in exploiting and deceiving others.

In the early 1970s, based on interpretations of Machiavelli's writings and several other political works, Christie and Geis (1970) conceptualised Machiavellianism as a distinct personality construct, resulting in the publication of the MACH-IV scale as a non-diagnostic standard self-assessment tool, a measure still commonly used today.  The research by Christie's team yielded four main characteristics of a Machiavellian manipulator: a lack of empathy and emotional attachment in interpersonal relationships, a utilitarian stance with little concern for conventional moral and ethical constraints, an absence of gross psychopathology with an instrumentalist view of others, and a low ideological commitment with a focus on getting work done.

Since then, the interest in Machiavellianism has grown substantially (for reviews, see Fehr, Samsom, & Paulhus, 1992; Jones & Paulhus, 2009).  As stated by Boozer, Forte, and Harris (2004), defining Machiavellianism encompasses three interrelated topics: beliefs, behaviours, and characteristics.  Machiavellian beliefs revolve around issues of trust and deception, essentially reflecting a mind-set in which it is acceptable to treat people as a means to an end if the situation permits (Lewin & Stephens, 1994).  Machiavellian behaviours reflect such beliefs; hence the behaviours involve a variety of persuasive and cunning schemes, ranging from the use of flattery to deception (McHoskey, Worzel, & Szyarto, 1998; McIlwain, 2003).  In view of such beliefs and behaviours, Machiavellians are characterised by what

Christie and Geis (1970) termed the 'cool syndrome': emotionally detached, calculating and cynical, yet skilled at being sociable and amiable especially during short-term encounters. They are known to be "pragmatists" with the ability to maintain indifference and pursue self-interests realistically within a setting where right or wrongful behaviour is ambiguous. Machiavellianism also denotes a duplicitous interpersonal style, with the assumption that Machiavellians have typical intrinsic motives like sex, achievement, and power, and their motivation is purely instrumental (Ryckman, Thornton, & Butler, 1994; Stewart & Stewart, 2006).

Although these manipulative behaviours may be the first attribute readily observed developmentally, the sheer preparedness and willingness to engage in such behavioural manipulation imply an underlying cynicism towards others. The dark view of plain distrust and cynically expecting the worst of others is perhaps the earliest hallmark of a Machiavellian outlook (Erikson, 1950). Christie and Geis (1970) speculated on Machiavellianism among children and developed the Kiddie Mach test, but carried out little developmental research to understand how and when such beliefs or behaviours develop. In a study by Sutton and Keogh (2000) that used the Kiddie Mach scale, it was suggested that children become more cynical and pessimistic as they age, indicating that whilst the lack of faith in human nature may merely inchoate in children with Machiavellian propensities, a more coherent Machiavellian view emerges at a later point in development. Using path analysis, it was statistically documented by Hunter, Gerbing, and Boster (1982) that the development of cynicism predates the adoption of coercive, competitive behaviours.

**Psychopathy**

French physician Philippe Pinel is generally credited with recognising psychopathy as a specific mental disorder (Smith, 1978). In the early 19th century, Pinel (1801/1806) observed some of his patients engaging in impulsive acts with frequent episodes of extreme violence and self-harm (see also Millon, Simonsen, & Birket-Smith, 1998). In his writing, he described psychopathy as 'insanity without delirium' as patients showed no impaired reasoning or intellectual abilities and no evidence of what is now known as psychosis. In other words, these individuals were able to comprehend the irrationality of their irresponsible behaviours. This condition of missing conscience as well as guiltlessness is known by several other terms in the

field of psychiatry over the past century, which include 'psychopathic inferiority', 'moral insanity', and 'moral imbecility' (Stout, 2005).

Contemporary understanding of the clinical construct of psychopathy began with the publication of Cleckley's (1941) text, *The Mask of Sanity*, and Cleckley's characterisation of psychopathy remains relevant today. Psychopathy is typically represented by individuals who have poor interpersonal skills, behavioural problems, and an inability to feel remorse. Central character elements include high impulsivity, emotional coldness, pathological lying, and thrill-seeking along with low empathy.

Although psychopathy has generally been construed as a unitary construct, seminal and contemporary studies theorise that it is heterogeneous (for a review, see Skeem, Poythress, Edens, Lilienfeld, & Cale, 2003). Karpman (1941, 1948) was one of the pioneers who made a distinction between two variants of psychopathy: primary psychopathy is underpinned by a genetically inherited affective deficit that hampers self-regulation and normal adjustment, whereas secondary psychopathy reflects an environmentally acquired affective disturbance – an indirect consequence of poor intelligence, psychotic thinking, excessive neurotic anxiety, or other characteristics that increase a person's vulnerability to chronic misbehaviour. Karpman believed that people with primary psychopathy suffer from a lack of anxiety, and due to their fearless, unworried attitudes they do not consider consequences ahead of acting even though their actions may cause them to be subjected to punishment, apprehension, stress, or disapproval. Due to such emotional detachment, it is argued that primary psychopaths are able to make antisocial choices when it pleases them. Similarly, they can inhibit their antisocial impulses when necessary, not due to conscience, but because it suits their purpose at that moment. Furthermore, those with primary psychopathy are known to exhibit interpersonal behaviours that reflect extraversion, confidence, and dominance (Blackburn, 1975, 1998). Cleckley (1941) theorised that primary psychopaths experience a condition he called 'semantic aphasia', as he found that they are unable to grasp the meaning of words like other people, which distances them from the reality of human experience. Secondary psychopathy, on the other hand, can be understood to be an emotional adaptation to factors such as parental rejection and abuse (Porter, 1996), which explains why they are viewed as more responsive to treatment as compared to primary psychopaths (Skeem, Johansson, Andershed, Kerr, & Louden, 2007). Karpman considered secondary psychopaths to be more reactive,

reckless, and impulsive, while some theorists (e.g., Blackburn, 1998) described them as individuals who are more withdrawn, emotionally disturbed, and submissive.

One thing to note is that the evolving construct of psychopathy has also been referred to as 'sociopathy' and 'Dissocial Personality Disorder', in attempts to provide explanations for antisocial tendencies ascribed to social factors (Millon et al., 1998). Robert Hare (1980, 1985) developed the widely-used Psychopathy Checklist (aimed at clinical populations) and Self-Report Psychopathy Scales (aimed at non-clinical populations) based on the concepts derived from Cleckley's (1941) original criteria. Current and previous versions of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder, as well as the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD-10; World Health Organisation, 1992), also contain many characteristics set forth by Cleckley in his description of the psychopath, but do not sanction the term 'psychopathy'. The closest equivalent to psychopathy in the current version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder, Fifth Edition (DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association, 2013) is Antisocial Personality Disorder.

A conundrum exists: while all these terms are often considered synonymous, many researchers have expressed hesitance to continue this trend, largely due to disputes such as over-diagnosis, underlying neurocognitive differences, and causes of the condition (e.g., Hare, Hart, & Harpur, 1991; Ogloff, 2006; Pemment, 2013). As such, it should be kept in mind that the characteristics and research findings drawn from the psychopathy research often overlap with the Antisocial or Dissocial Personality Disorder literature.

**Narcissism**

The term 'narcissism' was derived from the third book of *Metamorphoses* published in the first century, in which Roman poet Ovid (8 a.d./2004) tells the tale of Narcissus and Echo. Narcissus was a young man of exceptional beauty who spurned the advances of many potential lovers. However, after Narcissus's brutal rejection of the love of the nymph Echo (named as such because she was cursed to repeat the words of another), the goddess Nemesis punished Narcissus by leading him to a pond where he fell in love with his own reflection. Distressed because the object of his love could not love him back, he pined away and died.

After years of interpretation and reinterpretation of Ovid's myth, it was only much later in the 19th century that Havelock Ellis (1898) coined the term 'Narcissus-like', linking the mythological term to the clinical condition of 'auto-eroticism', a condition where a person's sexual feelings are transformed into self-admiration. While Ellis (1928) made clear that the term 'Narcissus-like' was intended to refer to a psychological attitude, Näcke (1899) had previously used the term 'Narcismus' or its English equivalent 'narcissism' to describe sexual deviation or disorder. The term then evolved into a highly specialised psychoanalytic term with a strong emphasis on self-love (e.g., Freud, 1905/1953; Rank, 1911). Today, narcissism broadly refers to a long-standing pattern of self-centredness, a grandiose sense of self-importance, lack of empathy, and an overwhelming need for approval and admiration.

People with pathological levels of narcissism have a great tendency to distort their positive self-view into unreasonably high expectations and aspirations (Kernberg, 1998; Stone, 1998). Kernberg explained that clinicians are particularly interested in those in the realm of pathological narcissism, especially in forensic settings. Ronningstam (2005) also pointed out that terms such as 'pathological narcissism', 'disordered narcissism', 'Narcissistic Personality Disorder', and even 'psychopathy' are often used interchangeably, seemingly indicating that they refer to very much the same entity. In the DSM-5, the Narcissistic Personality Disorder is classified under Cluster B personality disorders (along with other personality disorders including Antisocial Personality Disorder). Cluster B disorders are characterised by dramatic, overly emotional, as well as erratic thinking and behaviour. As shall be seen in this thesis, there is a good deal of conceptual and empirical overlap among the Dark Triad traits, but the three can be conceptualised as separate entities.

However, in accordance with modern-day dimensional models of personality, narcissism is said to be a continuous personality variable that has normal socially-oriented as well as morbid maladaptive variations (Ronningstam, 2005). It is contended that a healthy level of narcissism is in fact adaptive and necessary within each individual to uphold a positive self-view, as well as to manage emotions such as pride, envy, shame, inferiority, humiliation, and guilt. The Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Hall, 1979) was a measure developed to assess the subclinical form of the DSM-defined personality disorder.

Narcissism as a topic of research has gone through a rather puzzling course. On one hand, some researchers have indicated that narcissism is linked to aggression, maladjustment, and unhappiness (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Kernis & Sun, 1994; Raskin & Novacek, 1989). Myers and Zeigler-Hill's (2012) study using the bogus pipeline method revealed that narcissistic participants may be inflating their self-esteem to cover for a deep-seated sense of inferiority. On the other hand, some scholars have asserted that there is an association between narcissism and certain indicators of psychological well-being such as self-esteem regulation and life satisfaction (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Sedikides, Rudich, Gregg, Kumashiro, & Rusbult, 2004).

One way to explain these contradictory conclusions is to consider making a distinction between different types of narcissism (Rose, 2002). Several studies have talked about distinguishing between the *grandiose* and *vulnerable* aspects of narcissism (Cain, Pincus, & Ansell, 2008; Cooper & Ronningstam, 1992; Dickinson & Pincus, 2003; Pincus & Roche, 2011; Røvik, 2001). The lay understanding of narcissism is most commonly associated with arrogant and conceited behaviours, which are described by the term narcissistic grandiosity. This is said to include expressions of maladaptive self-enhancement, being demanding, denial of weaknesses; grandiose narcissists sometimes even appear socially charming despite disregarding other people's needs. Vulnerable narcissism, on the other hand, is said to involve feelings of profound inferiority, helplessness, and shame. Vulnerable narcissists are known to be oversensitive to people's evaluation, resulting in subsequent emotional and behavioural dysregulation.

**Biological and Environmental Origins of the Dark Triad**

Since the introduction of the Dark Triad concept, several theoretical and empirical postulations have been put forward to explain the origins of these traits. Theoretically, it has been proposed that evolutionary behaviour predicts both the development and the thriving of predatory subgroups (Mealey, 1995). Empirically, behaviour–genetic studies have been conducted to dissect the relative contributions of genetic and environmental factors on the Dark Triad traits. Studies examining the genetic and environmental bases of the Dark Triad have serious implications, especially in the legal context; with more efforts to link genes to antisocial or criminal behaviour, genetic makeup can be used as evidence in a court of law,

influencing court decisions and the sentencing that may follow. By the same token, if the Dark Triad traits are deemed "psychosocially-rooted" conditions, this argument can be used to constitute a mitigating (or aggravating) consideration. This means that aetiological models should take into consideration developmental stages and processes, as well as genetic predispositions.

As shall be seen in the examples below, multiple studies based on the conventional twin design have come to the conclusion that there is some form of genetic component in the expression of certain aversive personality traits. In this section, the aetiology of each trait is distinctly explored to address the nature–nurture interaction relationship.

**Psychopathy**

Viding, Blair, Moffitt, and Plomin (2005) used teacher ratings of children's callous–unemotional and antisocial behaviour traits in their twin study. They reported that antisocial behaviours in seven-year-olds with high levels of callous–unemotional traits appear to have a strong genetic influence, whereas antisocial behaviours in those without such psychopathic tendencies are primarily environmentally mediated. That being said, Viding and colleagues made clear that genes are not a blueprint that solely determines outcome. Rather, they act together with other environmental risk or protective factors which could either increase or reduce the risk of the disorder. Due to socialisation, non-shared environmental factors can contribute to the expression of genetic risk for psychopathy.

In a similar vein, Tuvblad, Fanti, Andershed, Colins, and Larsson (2017) emphasised the importance of significant shared environmental influences, in particular for callous–unemotional traits amongst five-year-old twins, as shown in their recent study that also used a teacher-report measure. These findings contradict some of the results from other research conducted with adolescents and adult twins that have found little or no influence of the shared environment (for reviews, see Tuvblad, 2014; Waldman & Rhee, 2006). It appears that despite evidence from behavioural genetics research that heritable influences (approximately 50% of the total variance) are of importance in the development of antisocial behaviour, there is also compelling evidence that both shared and non-shared environmental influences explain the remaining half of the variance.

The neuropsychological literature on psychopathy has focused primarily on two core neural regions that appear to be dysfunctional in psychopathy, namely the amygdala (i.e., the area that mediates fear and anxiety) and the ventromedial prefrontal cortex (i.e., the part of the brain associated with sentiments such as empathy and guilt) (Blair, 2007, 2008). Findings from a diffusion tensor magnetic resonance imaging study by Craig et al. (2009) suggested that irregularities in the uncinate fasciculus, a white matter tract connecting the amygdala and the orbitofrontal cortex, may be part of the neurobiological mechanisms underpinning the impulsive, antisocial, and emotional detachment associated with psychopathy. It was argued in the study that a history of institutionalisation, alcohol and/or substance abuse might have contributed to the anatomical difference between patients diagnosed with psychopathy and healthy controls.

Using a different methodology, Motzkin, Newman, Kiehl, and Koenigs (2011) assessed the structural and functional connectivity of the ventromedial prefrontal cortex in criminals diagnosed with psychopathy. Brain images from both diffusion tensor imaging and functional magnetic resonance imaging techniques showed reduced connections between the ventromedial prefrontal cortex and the amygdala. Together these findings provide evidence that a specific neurobiological abnormality underlies criminal psychopathy.

However, there are difficulties in interpreting brain imaging studies of violent criminals, because those who are involved in violent criminal behaviour often have a history of being addicted to alcohol and/or other drugs, hence such findings cannot determine whether brain differences lead to addiction or whether substance use and violent behaviour precede the structural brain changes. As the ventromedial prefrontal cortex is implicated in a variety of functions such as decision-making and behavioural control, impairment in this region may contribute to psychopaths' disordered lifestyle and may increase the risk for substance abuse. On the other hand, being exposed to drugs and alcohol can exacerbate behavioural problems for those with psychopathic tendencies. In sum, while there is evidence to suggest a genetic aetiology in psychopathy, it cannot be denied that environmental factors do contribute to such antisocial tendencies.

**Narcissism**

Theories on what causes pathological narcissism have tended to focus on environmental factors over biological factors (Wright & Furnham, 2014). Early research on the influence of environmental factors include those of Kernberg (1975), Kohut (1977), and Millon (1981), which suggest that narcissistic tendencies are a developmental outcome related to parenting. It was proposed by Kernberg and Kohut in their works that narcissistic disturbances are consequences of parental rejection, abandonment, or alienation. Millon, on the other hand, argued that instead of parental coldness, narcissism may be the result of parental overindulgence and excessive admiration of the child's worth. In a recent empirical study, Brummelman et al. (2015) presented longitudinal evidence that early socialisation experiences in the form of parental overvaluation predicts the development of narcissism in children. In general, the consensus, especially in the psychoanalytic literature, is that early parenting plays a role, and this has been supported by a systematic quantitative study by Otway and Vignoles (2006).

Impaired empathy is one of the hallmark features of patients with Narcissistic Personality Disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2000; Kernberg, 1970; Ronningstam, 2010), hence neurobiological models of narcissism have focused on regions in the neural network that underlie empathy. In an exploratory study using functional magnetic resonance imaging with a non-clinical sample, Fan et al. (2011) discovered that individuals high in narcissism showed decreased deactivation of the right anterior insula (i.e., the region involved in cognitive functioning and regulation of emotion) when asked to emotionally empathise with other people. Schulze et al. (2013) went on to expand this line of research by investigating grey matter abnormalities in the anterior insula of individuals with pathological narcissism. Compared with the healthy controls, patients with Narcissistic Personality Disorder were found to have less grey matter in the left anterior insula of the cerebral cortex. The findings of these studies provide evidence for neurobiological and neurofunctional abnormalities in empathy-related brain regions of narcissistic individuals, but it should be noted that it is important to investigate the interplay between various regions of the brain, as more than one brain location may be responsible for empathic functioning.

A twin study was conducted in China by Luo, Cai, and Song (2014) to examine the genetic and environmental bases of two dimensions within narcissism,

namely intrapersonal grandiosity and interpersonal entitlement. It was found that both dimensions are moderately heritable, with considerable non-shared environmental influence. These findings echoed previous research that have shown that shared environmental factors have relatively little impact on both clinical and non-clinical narcissism (Kendler et al., 2008; Livesley, Jang, Jackson, & Vernon, 1993; Luo, Cai, Sedikides, & Song, 2014; Torgersen et al., 2000).

**Machiavellianism**

Only a small number of studies have researched Machiavellianism by means of neuroscientific techniques. By examining images of magnetic resonance brain imaging, Nestor et al. (2012) reported that higher Machiavellianism was associated with greater grey matter volume of the left lateral orbital gyrus, a region responsible for evaluating social opportunities and threat. These findings were consistent with those of Verbeke et al. (2011) who found significant size differences in brain locations such as the basal ganglia (i.e., area related to reward seeking), left prefrontal cortex (i.e., area involved in social planning), insula (i.e., area related to coping with negative emotions), and hippocampus (i.e., area associated mainly with memory) between people who score high and low on the MACH-IV scale. When comparing brain activity differences, people high in Machiavellianism exhibited higher activation in areas involved in reward-related processing, anticipation of risky situations, and inference-making, such as the inferior and middle frontal gyrus, anterior insula, thalamus, and anterior cingulate cortex when engaging in a social dilemma task (Bereczkei, Deak, Papp, Perlaki, & Orsi, 2013). Overall, these research findings point towards brain structural and functional differences between people high and low in Machiavellianism, but the determination of a causal directional relationship between biology and Machiavellian behaviour or personality is more elusive.

Unlike psychopathy and narcissism, which have been consistently found to have moderate-to-large heritable components, Machiavellianism alone has been shown to have a more pronounced shared environmental component (Vernon, Villani, Vickers, & Harris, 2008; Veselka, Schermer, & Vernon, 2011). Several studies have put forward that the development of Machiavellianism is associated with social modelling (Kraut & Price, 1976) and poor quality parent–child interaction such as low maternal care and high paternal overprotection (Abell,

Lyons, & Brewer, 2014; Jonason, Lyons, & Bethell, 2014). This suggests that Machiavellianism is most likely of the three to be acquired over time, and therefore most likely to be modified on the basis of experience.

**Nature, Nurture, and Epigenetics**

Given the presumption that temperament has a biological basis (Goldsmith et al., 1987), there are a couple of arguments that have been put forth to explain how temperament differences in new-borns can possibly predict personality disorders. Firstly, difficult temperament characteristics may contribute directly to more intense levels of negative emotions, putting children at greater risk for behavioural difficulties and later psychopathology, especially when faced with environmental stressors (Wachs, 1992; Zentner & Shiner, 2012). Secondly, a temperamentally difficult infant increases the likelihood of parental irritability towards the infant, thus developing a maladaptive pattern of parent–child interaction (Rutter & Quinton, 1984), confirming the presence of evocative gene–environment correlational processes (Plomin, DeFries, & Loehlin, 1977). This again demonstrates that potentially undesirable and pathological personality traits such as the Dark Triad, while partly predictable through genetic aetiology, are still susceptible to environmental conditions. All in all, it appears that a combination of factors such as biological vulnerability, early social interactions with caregivers, and psychological factors involving temperament contribute to the development of the Dark Triad traits, or any trait for that matter.

Although the work on behaviour genetics has yet to elucidate the relative contributions of genes and environment, the bottom line, according to Turkheimer (2000), is that all human behavioural traits are heritable. He also stated that the effect of being raised within the same family (i.e., shared environment) is smaller than that of genes. However, a considerable portion of the variability in complex behavioural traits is not accounted for by the effects of genes or families, suggesting that non-shared environment should account for this portion. In a more recent paper, Chabris, Lee, Cesarini, Benjamin, and Laibson (2015) added that since human behavioural traits are associated with a large number of genetic variants, the effect of any one variant on any one trait is likely to be small. It is therefore unjustified to assume that there might be just one gene "for" one complex trait (see also Plomin & Deary, 2015).

Research into this interplay between genes and environment has identified a mechanism known as 'epigenetics', which mediates environmental and psychological factors to regulate the activity of genome function without involving changes within the deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) sequence (González-Pardo & Álvarez, 2013). Epigenetic mechanisms have been used to explain the nexus between heredity and the environment that contribute to normal and abnormal development. Indeed, early life adversity such as child maltreatment has been shown to play a critical role in the emergence of borderline personality disorder and this occurrence could have been through epigenetic programming (Prados et al., 2015). In Kaminsky et al.'s (2008) epigenomic profiling study of risk-taking behaviour in a pair of identical twins said to be phenotypically discordant (one was a war journalist and one was a part-time office manager in a law firm; contrasting psychometric profiles between siblings were also reported), several DNA methylation differences were identified, some of which may have had subsequent developmental and behavioural implications.

All things considered, if epigenetic factors are the underpinning molecular mechanisms that can explain phenotypic differences between identical twins, there is a strong case to be made against the conception that genes are "set in stone". Early experiences play a crucial role in determining how genes are "switched on and off". In practice today, the gene-centred viewpoint is insufficient for explaining individual differences.

**The Dark Triad and Models of Personality**

Efforts have been made to map the Dark Triad on the 'Big Five' personality traits to review any overlap between dark and normal personality models. The Big Five are collectively a general taxonomy or structural model that conceptualises personality traits as five broad, relatively distinct domains of individual differences. These five domains include extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness. As postulated by Costa and McCrae (1992), each of these broad factors has also been further defined by more narrow traits or facets that are prototypical markers of the five factors, as shown in Table 1.

When examining the relationship between the Dark Triad and the variables of the Big Five, the pattern of results in the existing literature has not been consistent.

However, when the Big Five facets are separated, the similarities and differences appear to be clearer.

Table 1
*The Facets of the Big Five, as suggested by Costa & McCrae (1992)*

| Big Five Dimensions | | Facet (and correlated trait adjective)* |
|---|---|---|
| **E** | **E**xtraversion vs. introversion | Gregariousness (sociable) |
| | | Assertiveness (forceful) |
| | | Activity (energetic) |
| | | Excitement-seeking (adventurous) |
| | | Positive emotions (enthusiastic) |
| | | Warmth (outgoing) |
| **A** | **A**greeableness vs. antagonism | Trust (forgiving) |
| | | Straightforwardness (not demanding) |
| | | Altruism (warm) |
| | | Compliance (not stubborn) |
| | | Modesty (not show-off) |
| | | Tender-mindedness (sympathetic) |
| **C** | **C**onscientiousness vs. lack of direction | Competence (efficient) |
| | | Order (organised) |
| | | Dutifulness (not careless) |
| | | Achievement striving (thorough) |
| | | Self-discipline (not lazy) |
| | | Deliberation (not impulsive) |
| **N** | **N**euroticism vs. emotional stability | Anxiety (tense) |
| | | Angry hostility (irritable) |
| | | Depression (not contented) |
| | | Self-consciousness (shy) |
| | | Impulsiveness (moody) |
| | | Vulnerability (not self-confident) |
| **O** | **O**penness vs. closedness to experience | Ideas (curious) |
| | | Fantasy (imaginative) |
| | | Aesthetics (artistic) |
| | | Actions (wide interests) |
| | | Feelings (excitable) |
| | | Values (unconventional) |

*Note.* Adapted from John & Srivastava (1999), *The Big-Five trait taxonomy: History, measurement, and theoretical perspectives*, p. 110.
*Scores of the trait adjectives (listed in parentheses following each facet) correlated substantially with scores on that preceding facet, as reported in Costa and McCrae's (1992) study.

**Five-Factor Model**

Overall, Machiavellianism has been shown to be negatively correlated with agreeableness and conscientiousness, but positively correlated with neuroticism (e.g., Ashton, Lee, & Son, 2000; Paulhus, Williams, & Harms, 2001; Vernon et al., 2008). Specifically, DeShong, Helle, Lengel, Meyer, and Mullins-Sweatt (2017) reported that Machiavellianism was positively correlated with the depression and angry

hostility facets of neuroticism, but also showed negative correlations with the warmth and positive emotions facet of extraversion.

Paulhus and Williams (2002) reported that psychopathy showed a negative relationship with agreeableness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism, but demonstrated a positive relationship with extraversion and openness. However, according to the study by Miller, Lynam, Widiger, and Leukefeld (2001), people high in psychopathy seemed to score high on the assertiveness and excitement-seeking facets of extraversion, but at the same time they also appeared to be high-scorers of the competence facet of conscientiousness, as well as the angry hostility and impulsivity facets of neuroticism.

Moreover, more detailed relationships are obtained when distinguishing between the two variants of psychopathy. One instrument that is based on the two-factor interpretation is the Levenson Self-Report Psychopathy Scale (LSRP; Levenson, Kiehl, & Fitzpatrick, 1995). In a study by Jakobwitz and Egan (2006), both primary psychopathy and secondary psychopathy were significantly associated with low agreeableness and high neuroticism, but had no relationships with conscientiousness. Ross, Lutz, and Bailley (2004) in their study reported similar results, but they did find low conscientiousness to be a significant marker of secondary psychopathy.

On the whole, there has not been a significant correlation between narcissism and conscientiousness (e.g., Duijsens & Diekstra, 1996). However, low agreeableness, when combined with high extraversion and high openness, have been associated with narcissism (e.g., Paulhus & Williams, 2002; Widiger & Trull, 1992; Wiggins & Pincus, 1989). When Bradlee and Emmons (1992) examined each component of narcissism as measured by the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1988), there were minor variations in their respective relationships with each of the Big Five factors. For instance, the authority component showed positive correlations with conscientiousness, a pattern which was not found in any of the other components.

Wu and LeBreton (2011) provided a summary of their review, as illustrated in Table 2. Based on the relationships between each Dark Triad trait and the global traits of the Five Factor Model, several conclusions can be drawn. First, distinctions among the Dark Triad emerge when the Big Five is broken down into facets. Second, the complex patterns emerging from Big Five studies could be due to the

various measures that have been used to assess each Dark Triad trait, which could have made direct comparisons with other studies more challenging. That said, low agreeableness appears to be the most consistent predictor of the overall Dark Triad construct.

Table 2
*The Relationship between the Dark Triad and the Five Factor Model*

|  | Openness | Conscientiousness | Extraversion | Agreeableness | Neuroticism |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Narcissism | + |  | + | − | + |
| Machiavellianism |  | − |  | − | + |
| Psychopathy | + | − | + | − | − |

*Note.* Adapted from a review by Wu & LeBreton (2011), *Personnel Psychology*, p. 603.
+ indicates a positive relationship; − indicates a negative relationship

## HEXACO Model

According to Lee and Ashton (2014), the Dark Triad had been developed independently from the Big Five factors, therefore it was argued the three traits are not fully represented in Five Factor Models of personality. In fact, several researchers find it more relevant to use the HEXACO model of personality structure (Ashton et al., 2004) in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the personality characteristics of those who exhibit Dark Triad personalities, because it explicitly contrasts prosocial and antisocial behaviour (e.g., Jones & Figueredo, 2013; Lee & Ashton, 2005; Lee et al., 2013). The model comprises six dimensions, represented by the acronym HEXACO: Honesty–Humility (H), Emotionality (E), eXtraversion (X), Agreeableness (A), Conscientiousness (C), and Openness to Experience (O). The sixth personality dimension termed 'Honesty–Humility' contains factors related to feelings of entitlement, temptation to go against rules and regulations, endorsement of unethical business decision, manipulation of others for self-gain, and material greed (Ashton & Lee, 2009; Lee, Ashton, Morrison, Cordery, & Dunlop, 2008) – features commonly found amongst people who score high on the Dark Triad measures. The studies mentioned here have shown evidence of relationships between the Honesty–Humility dimension and the Dark Triad traits.

The purpose of mapping the Dark Triad onto fundamental personality traits is to provide an explanation for the construct's overlapping nature. As mentioned at the start of this thesis, an ongoing key conceptual debate is the agenda of unifying or

separating the traits of the Dark Triad.  In the next sections, the viewpoints of both arguments are first presented.  A review of evidence from the literature is then discussed in terms of personality correlates and behavioural outcomes of the Dark Triad.

**Uniform vs. Unique Perspective of the Dark Triad**

Attributable to their underlying aversive nature, phenotypically similar behaviours, positive interrelationship among constructs, as well as conceptual similarities, the argument is made from an evolutionary standpoint that these three Dark Triad traits represent nearly identical constructs of a core, global antagonistic factor (Jonason, Li, & Teicher, 2010; Jonason et al., 2009).  Indeed, in spite of their diverse theoretical origins, the connections among the three traits have been noted in both clinical and non-clinical samples (e.g., Hart & Hare, 1998; Lilienfeld & Andrews, 1996; McHoskey, 1995, 2001; McHoskey et al., 1998).  It has therefore been concluded from researchers who support *unificationist* theories that the substantial overlap among these constructs indicate that they are simply three labels for the same construct.  Besides having shown empirical overlaps, the three traits can be loaded to a single latent factor (e.g., Hodson, Hogg, & MacInnis, 2009).
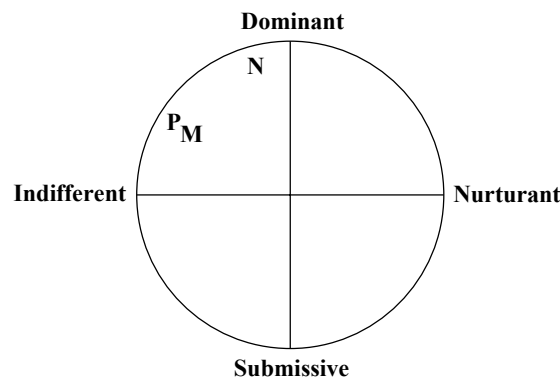


*Figure 1*. Typical location of the Dark Triad on the Interpersonal Circumplex. Adapted from a book chapter by Jones & Paulhus (2011a), Handbook of Interpersonal psychology: Theory, research, assessment, and therapeutic interventions, p. 250.

While only a few studies have positioned all three Dark Triad members simultaneously within an interpersonal circumplex space, a more thorough analysis by Jones and Paulhus (2011a) revealed that all three traits project onto Quadrant 2 of the circumplex, indicating that individuals high in Dark Triad traits are high on

agency and low on communion (Figure 1). This means that all three Dark Triad traits share a general tendency of 'getting ahead' instead of 'getting along'.

On the other hand, researchers advocating *discrimination* theories view Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism as distinct domains (Jones & Paulhus, 2010; Vernon et al., 2008), as evidence has indicated that these traits vary in biological bases, underlying processes and dynamics, and the patterns in which they interact with other constructs within nomological networks.

The literature has shown that there are good theoretical and empirical reasons to treat all three dark personalities as different measures. Theoretically, while psychopathy measures are positively correlated with narcissism, there are differences between the two personality traits (Sandoval, Hancock, Poythress, Edens, & Lilienfeld, 2000). Narcissists are known to have emotions and feelings, and therefore a conscience, hence they are bothered by how they behave, especially whether they have served their own interests as best as they could (Stout, 2005), whereas psychopaths who have a diminished capacity for self-reflection are usually not troubled by their own deviant behaviours (Tamayo & Raymond, 1977).

In a similar vein, a behavioural genetic study addressing origins of moral reason by Campbell et al. (2009) found that psychopathy was the only Dark Triad trait that correlated negatively with abstract moral reasoning, which represents the highest level of moral development according to Kohlberg (1984). Taken together, the existing literature highlights that differences among the three traits exist, and therefore the Dark Triad should not be regarded as a single, unitary construct.

Understandably, the traits are not entirely different. From the literature, there seems to be quite an overlap among the Dark Triad traits, for instance, people high in Machiavellianism and psychopathy tend to portray characteristics such as superficial charm and detached interpersonal style. Paulhus (2014) has proposed that callousness – that is, the lack of empathy towards others – is the common feature that explains the overlap, both conceptually and empirically. In Furnham, Richards, and Paulhus's (2013) review, it was speculated that the overlap that results from this common factor of callousness may have motivated researchers to consider the Dark Triad as a unitary concept.

Moreover, some unificationist theorists have alluded to positive intercorrelations among standard measures of all three constructs as a reason to assume a composite construct. Results from Paulhus and Williams's (2002) study

showed weak to moderate positive intercorrelations among the three measures, ranging from 0.25 to 0.50. This pattern of data has been echoed by Rauthmann (2011). In Jones and Paulhus's (2011b) study, intercorrelations among the traits were positive and significant, with a moderately high correlation of 0.62 between the Self-Report Psychopathy Scale – Fourth Edition (SRP 4; Paulhus, Neumann, Hare, Williams, & Hemphill, 2016) and MACH-IV, a correlation of 0.48 between SRP and NPI, and a modest correlation of 0.32 between MACH-IV and NPI. Furnham, Richards, Rangel, and Jones (2014) conducted a meta-analysis on over 100 correlations between the three measures and drew several conclusions. First, almost all correlations are positive and significant. Second, about a quarter of these correlations have a coefficient above 0.50, indicating a moderate relationship. Third, the highest mean correlations seem to be those between psychopathy and Machiavellianism. Largely speaking, it appears that there are moderate correlations among the Dark Triad traits, but it can be argued that the correlations are not strong enough to provide sufficient grounds for supporting the unification perspective.

It should also be acknowledged that the moderate-sized positive intercorrelations among all three constructs may result in similar outcome correlates. Research within an evolutionary framework, for instance, has shown the composite Dark Triad score to have correlations with measures of short-term mating and other life history indicators (Jonason et al., 2009; Jonason & Tost, 2010). Nonetheless, it is important to note that some studies have not observed a correlation between Machiavellianism and narcissism (e.g., Jonason & Kavanagh, 2010), whilst others have shown weak correlations (e.g., Lee & Ashton, 2005). Vernon et al. (2008) concluded that even though the three constructs conceptually appear to assess overlapping dimensions of personality, there has been inconsistent empirical support for this overlap. Therefore, the theoretical rationale for combining the Dark Triad traits into a single measure becomes unclear.

As mentioned above, a key concern of taking on a unificationist approach to the Dark Triad comes from the notion that Machiavellianism and narcissism can be subsumed within the much broader construct of psychopathy. Indeed, there is a comorbidity of narcissism in psychopathy (Widiger, 2006). Additionally, the concept of Machiavellianism is also said to resemble the main features of psychopathy so much to the extent that both are essentially the same construct that have been studied in various disciplines of psychology (McHoskey et al., 1998).

Furthermore, measures of psychopathy such as the Psychopathy Checklist–Revised (PCL-R; Hare, 2003) and the Psychopathic Personality Inventory (PPI; Lilienfeld & Andrews, 1996), include statements describing egocentrism and deception that directly assess both Machiavellianism and narcissism. This argument relates to the *construct creep* phenomenon noted in the introduction. Furnham et al. (2013) criticised that some psychopathy measures, such as the PPI that consists of 180 items and eight subscales, are too broad, including items such as "*Frankly, I believe I am more important than most people*" under the Machiavellian Egocentricity facet. According to results from Glenn and Sellbom's (2015) study, psychopathy scores as measured by the PPI were overly definitional of the latent Dark Triad construct, confirming their opinion that the combination of the three constructs into a single concept does not provide any additional meaning. Miller and Lynam (2012) also criticised the PPI scale, specifically the Fearless Dominance facet, for assessing constructs that may in actual fact be indicators of psychological well-being (e.g., extraversion). This shows that researchers should exercise caution when evaluating the degree of similarities and distinctiveness of the Dark Triad as they rely partially on the properties of the measures used.

In order to uncover to what extent a unification or uniqueness position holds, Rauthmann and Kolar (2012) examined how the Dark Triad traits are perceived by asking people to evaluate the perceived "darkness" of each construct. Perceived benefits of a trait may be judged based on three criteria: desirability, consequences for oneself, and consequences for others (Judge, Piccolo, & Kosalka, 2009). A "dark" trait is judged as socially undesirable; beneficial for oneself, but detrimental for others. Of the three, narcissism was judged to be the least "dark", as people high in narcissism exhibit qualities that others find desirable, for instance being more physically appealing, charming, conscientious, and achievement-oriented. This study confirmed that at least in laypeople's perception, narcissism is regarded as unique compared with psychopathy and Machiavellianism in terms of perceived desirability, contributing to a growing body of literature that has found narcissism to be distinctive in many respects (Jonason, Li, & Buss, 2010; Jonason & Webster, 2012; Pailing, Boon, & Egan, 2014; Veselka et al., 2011). Overall, it appeared that people did not differentiate between desirability of a trait/behaviour and its consequences for others. According to Rauthmann and Kolar's interpretation, a behaviour is deemed undesirable if it entails detrimental consequences for others; the

lay perspective is that psychopaths and Machiavellians may cause harm to others but narcissists' harmful behaviour only affects themselves. Besides, narcissistic themes such as admiration and status are inherently seeming more desirable than Machiavellian and psychopathy themes of manipulation and callousness.

It was thus suggested by Rauthmann and Kolar (2013) that narcissism should be viewed as separate from the other two traits, which they referred to as the 'Malicious Two'. Even so, people high in narcissism are generally seen as positive when people first encounter them but the initial bright qualities tend to fade over time. Paulhus, Westlake, Calvez, and Harms (2013) warned that individuals high in narcissism can be very destructive and disruptive when dealing with others on a regular basis, suggesting that it is best to avoid recruiting such applicants in organisational settings.

### The Dark Triad Applied to Workplace Behaviour

With the emergence of this Dark Triad concept within a non-clinical and non-forensic context, considerable research has endeavoured to uncover contexts where one or more of the Dark Triad traits have shown to be advantageous (e.g., Hogan & Hogan, 2001). The workplace is arguably a key example of such a context. The premise is that those who display socially aversive attributes need not be violent criminals, despite the fact that they are disproportionately represented in offender populations. A few outcome variables associated with the Dark Triad have been described in the sections above. Here, one of the major outcome variable, workplace behaviour, is discussed in more detail.

Furnham (2010) specified cases in which people with high levels of Dark Triad traits, when equipped with positive qualities such as intelligence and physical attractiveness, often make greater progress in their careers. The contribution of each Dark Triad construct in the organisational psychology literature has been evident over the past few decades, apparent in the prevalence of research studying destructive, derailed, abusive, or toxic employees who engage in counterproductive work behaviour (for a review, see O'Boyle, Forsyth, Banks, & McDaniel, 2012).

People high on the Dark Triad measures may be able to 'get ahead' at work, but in many circumstances they cannot 'get along' and hence adversely affect workplace outcomes. For instance, narcissism is associated with unethical behaviour among Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) (Amernic & Craig, 2010; Galperin,

Bennett, & Aquino, 2011), while business psychopathy is linked to higher incidences of aggressive behaviour (Boddy, 2011), and Machiavellianism is related with diminished organisational and team commitment (Zettler, Friedrich, & Hilbig, 2011). In cases of leadership derailment, Ross (2013) stated that some leaders, especially those with narcissistic personality traits, often overplay their strengths, demonstrate dysfunctional traits, and blame others for their failures. It is also typical of them to seek "quick wins" over long-term sustainability.

**Machiavellianism**

Individuals high in Machiavellianism seek opportunities for impression management to obtain personal benefits, and are usually selected for high power positions because they often appear strong, persuasive, and assertive (Becker & O'Hair, 2007). The positive aspects of Machiavellianism, however, are usually offset by the negative consequences of regularly engaging in interpersonal manipulation. Indeed, people with high Machiavellianism are more likely to exhibit deviant organisational behaviours such as sabotage (Giacalone & Knouse, 1990) and theft (Harrell & Hartnagel, 1976). They tend not to be constrained by the desire to abide with standard operating procedures at work and are more willing to offload blame onto others (Kish-Gephart, Harrison, & Treviño, 2010). Consequently, individuals high in Machiavellianism are also perceived as less desirable as social partners (Wilson, Near, & Miller, 1998).

Kessler et al. (2010) argued that despite Machiavelli's notorious reputation as an advocate of political manipulation, in his original work (Machiavelli, 1532/1998), he wrote extensively about ways for political rulers to maintain order. Upon re-examining Machiavelli's manuscript, Kessler and colleagues regarded Machiavellianism as a multifaceted construct, and pointed out that most research on Machiavellianism focused solely on the manipulation aspect. As a result, they introduced the Organisational Machiavellianism Scale (OMS) that included aspects that have not been taken into account in previous scales, namely maintaining power and management practices. Findings in that study revealed that employees who scored high on the maintaining power and management practices factors were more conscientious and less likely to commit counterproductive work behaviours. In contrast, those scoring high on the manipulation factor were lower on conscientiousness and reported more counterproductive work behaviours.

The literature portrays Machiavellianism as a social advantage, in which having such skills makes it possible for one to establish influential social networks and gain respect from co-workers in order to attain desired outcomes, thus increasing job performance.  On the other hand, the tendency to manipulate people or situations to their favour, as well as the constant use of political machination in their pursuit of success may take a toll on their work performance in the long run.  Further, the Machiavellians' focus on self-interested needs, the lack of willingness to contribute to others' welfare, or even the engagement of abusive behaviours may evoke negative judgements from others (Rauthmann & Kolar, 2012; Wisse & Sleebos, 2016), proving to be detrimental within the organisational context.

**Psychopathy**

The label 'psychopath' is used loosely by various members of the legal system, including police, prosecutors, judges, probation officers, parole and prison officials, victims, and even defence lawyers, as a type of lay synonym for incorrigible.  However, Cleckley's (1941) initial work on the conceptualisation of psychopathy was based on his observations of white, middle-class male patients residing as inpatients of a mental hospital (Dinges, Atlis, & Vincent, 1997).  His observations were not focused on criminal history, acknowledging that many psychopaths are not involved with the criminal justice system, but instead flourish in businesses or other endeavours, mainly in careers that offer substantial material success.  Cleckley outlined the characteristics of psychopathy that are frequently associated with positive adjustment, such as superficial charm, intelligence, and low suicide rates.  They often develop expertise in several fields of knowledge, albeit lacking in precision and detail, with usually short lived interests.  Dutton (2012) also reasoned that psychopaths who have a grandiose self-perception are capable of remaining calm under pressure, and they tend not to display psychotic behaviours associated with highly disordered and highly delusional thinking.  The value of being emotionally detached is evident; the ability to stay preternaturally calm and free of anxiety allows them to succeed in society and occupy important positions.

In his book *Without Conscience*, Hare (1993) described 'subdeviant criminals' in the occupational context such as businesspersons, lawyers, doctors, academics, people in the entertainment industry, and so forth, who exhibit strong psychopathic tendencies without being involved with violent crime.  As also evident

in *Snakes in Suits* (Babiak & Hare, 2006) and in a recent study by Brooks and Fritzon (2016), the prevalence of psychopathy is higher in the business population, although many corporate psychopaths do not engage in illegal activities. The argument discussed here does not claim that non-institutionalised psychopaths are crime-free, but it potentially suggests that psychopaths in the workplace may come from more privileged backgrounds with comparatively less risk of legal penalties.

**Narcissism**

In a study that examined how narcissism influences self-presentation styles in job interviews, Paulhus et al. (2013) found that narcissistic individuals were regarded as having better performances compared with non-narcissists in simulated job interviews. People high in narcissism had an intuitive tendency to self-promote by engaging in extensive discussions and speaking at length – behaviours that portray self-confidence and expertise. When challenged and held accountable by skilled interviewers, unlike their less narcissistic counterparts who usually backed off into a tactical modesty, candidates who were more narcissistic actually boosted their attempts at self-enhancement and self-praise in efforts to make themselves look even better. It was found that these people high in narcissism were given the most positive evaluation, at least at the initial stage. These results were consistent with Wallace and Baumeister's (2002) study in which people with high narcissism scores were found to be more motivated in their efforts to outperform less narcissistic individuals, especially in situations where their performances are evaluated by others as these situations enable them to garner admiration. Paulhus and colleagues argued that this positive initial reaction (even if temporary) towards narcissists is enough to give them an added advantage in short-term contexts, such as job interviews. This shows how challenging it is to conduct effective interviews and how fallible it can be when interviewers make judgements during recruitment.

The 'kiss up kick down' work style, where individuals show respect to only those they see as authority figures and belittle those they perceive as being inferior to them, is common among people high in narcissism (Hogan, Raskin, & Fazzini, 1990). The frequent, alternate use of idealisation and denigration is a typical characteristic of narcissism, signifying an instability of self-esteem (Rhodewalt, Madrian, & Cheney, 1998). While it is a common conception that narcissists are extremely certain about their grandiose claims to superiority and brilliance (Robins

& John, 1997), it is in fact believed that such behaviour is compensatory where the positive attitude narcissists embrace is to conceal non-conscious, underlying feelings of inferiority. Laboratory studies noticed that narcissists react with rage, anxiety, hostility, and lower self-esteem when their performance in a valued domain is challenged, indicating that their overly positive self-views are relatively fragile (Konrath, Bushman, & Campbell, 2006; Twenge & Campbell, 2003). Supporting this interpretation, research participants recorded their emotions, self-esteem, and everyday experiences in daily diary measures, and it was found that more narcissistic individuals experienced an increase in self-esteem instability and extreme mood fluctuations, usually driven by dissatisfying social events (Bogart, Benotsch, & Pavlovic, 2004).

**Dark Triad**

The role of the Dark Triad in the adoption of manipulation tactics at work has also been examined. Generally, individuals at work may employ soft or hard tactics in pursuit of their goals (Farmer, Maslyn, Fedor, & Goodman, 1997). Soft tactics involve ingratiation and reason, designed to convince the targeted person that it is in their best interest to engage in the advocated behaviour. In contrast, hard tactics involve assertion and dominance whereby one attempts to force his or her will on the other person. Jonason and Webster (2012) reported that specific methods of influence were related to each of the three Dark Triad measures independently. Psychopathy was found to be related to the use of charm and coercion, Machiavellianism was associated with the use of charm, flirtation or sexual seduction, and narcissism involved invoking feelings of responsibility in others. However, this study reported that while individuals high in Dark Triad constructs modulated their choice of influence methods, the choice appears to be irrespective of who the target individual is, suggesting that people with high Dark Triad traits do not tailor their manipulation strategies to suit their target. Nonetheless, as discussed previously, individuals high in narcissism are more inclined to have a 'kiss up, kick down' behaviour pattern, it is therefore likely that they would vary their interaction when faced with different people.

In an attempt to examine the different response to qualitatively different provocations, Jones and Paulhus (2010) found that while people with high psychopathy in their study reacted with hostility to physical threat (i.e., white noise),

those with high narcissism responded in such a manner to ego threat (i.e., insult). Research has revealed that the way more narcissistic people react to threats to their self-worth is through exaggerating their accomplishments (Raskin, Novacek, & Hogan, 1991) and by devaluing others (Morf & Rhodewalt, 1993). Machiavellians' reactions tend to be more deliberate and cautious, and they are less likely to give in to temptation to organisational misconduct as easily as the other two character types normally do (Williams, Nathanson, & Paulhus, 2010). With regard to white-collar crimes, Jonason, Slomski, and Partyka (2012) put forward that Machiavellians, less prone to the impulsivity of psychopaths and hedonistic displays of the narcissists, are often the most successful perpetrators in organisations. Based on these studies, it would be reasonable to suppose that a person who scores high in one trait of the Dark Triad behaves differently from one who is high in a different trait.

The arguments presented so far highlight two points that are central to this thesis. First, each Dark Triad trait is associated with a unique approach to social influence, and therefore they should be considered as three separate traits. Second, it is worth noting that, while the majority of work contends that the Dark Triad generally brings about negative impact in the workplace, the review by O'Boyle et al. (2012) revealed inconsistencies upon close examination of the empirical findings. O'Boyle and colleagues mainly argued that contextual or situational factors are important moderators in determining whether Dark Triad traits will play a positive or negative role in workplace outcomes.

This points to the key idea that destructive organisational outcomes do not only stem from the destructive person, but also depend on the susceptible people surrounding the destructive person, and the environmental contexts, as well as the interaction among those three domains. This interactive model should also apply to other person-related outcome variables in different social settings. To exemplify this point, interpersonal manipulation in the broader contexts of political leadership and romantic relationship are discussed next.

### Interpersonal Manipulation: The Destructive and the Susceptible

It has been demonstrated above that despite their antagonistic interpersonal styles, individuals with subclinical levels of the Dark Triad traits may thrive in the everyday world, and in many cases some occupy the higher echelons of certain professions. High levels of the Dark Triad traits, in combination with attributes such

as intellect and physical attractiveness, facilitate the acquisition of influential upper-level positions and leadership roles.

**Political Leadership**

The concept of leadership has been constantly evolving; however, this concept is frequently associated with positive outcomes, usually accompanied by heroic, charismatic images of well-known leaders (Ashby & Miles, 2002; Bligh & Kohles, 2009). As discussed before, more research has looked into the dark side of leadership (e.g., Jonason, Slomski, & Partyka, 2012; Pelletier, 2012; Spain, Harms, & LeBreton, 2013), in which the term 'toxic' is commonly used to describe this dark side. Largely speaking, the dark side of leadership is often described using negative labels such as 'destructive', 'evil', 'bad', 'derailment', 'abusive', 'bullying' – undesirable characteristics that are often linked to people with high levels of Dark Triad traits.

To sound a note of caution, when speaking in terms of destructive leadership, the emphasis tends to be placed on leader traits such as the Dark Triad or manipulative behaviours (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). This view suggests a one-way communication, implying that the destructive leadership is something that leaders *do*, independent of the contexts and consequences of such behaviours, which clearly is not the case. It is therefore important not to lose sight of other elements related to destructive leaderships such as the followers' susceptibility and situational contexts that allow exploitation to occur.

Although the Dark Triad traits are generally construed as interpersonally maladaptive personality constructs, many people are still drawn to those who possess these traits. In Lipman-Blumen's (2004) work in the organisational context, she argued that in reality people favour some leaders despite their aversive behaviour, as these leaders tend to have the capacity to captivate followers by offering simple remedies to complex problems; people are often propelled towards individuals who are driven and able to offer inspiring visions. Especially in times of political crisis, it is easy for people to be misguided and assign greatness to such leaders. For example, after Germany's downfall in the First World War, the struggling nation became vulnerable to Adolf Hitler, a charismatic leader who vowed to return the country to its greatness. Germans viewed authoritarianism as a worthwhile trade for security. Charismatic leaders are known to be proficient in the use of language to

convince and possess impressive rhetorical skills (Burns, 1978; Harvey, 2001). Hitler, as well as leaders such as Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., were considered qualified charismatic leaders who held a brilliant ability to communicate with their supporters, whether it was to serve social causes or their self-interests (House & Howell, 1992; Robinson & Topping, 2012).

On the subject of Martin Luther King, Jr., a respectable leader in his battle against the segregation policies in his time, it is generally accepted that he is regarded by many as virtuous and saintly. However, a four-member panel appointed by Boston University had concluded that the pastor plagiarised passages in his dissertation for a 1955 doctoral degree (Carson, Holloran, Luker, & Russell, 1991). The press reported that King had borrowed from several secondary sources without proper attribution, including an earlier Boston University dissertation written by Jack Boozer, and materials from interpreters of the works of Paul Tillich and Henry Nelson Wieman. Even though King's extensive plagiarism is a critical matter in the biographical evaluation of King, and despite the inescapable fact that King was aware of his academic wrongdoing, the appointed committee of scholars had decided that it does not detract from his contributions as a leader in the civil rights movement (Garrow, 1991). In spite of the seriousness of King's violation of academic rules, it is still an undeniable fact that King's reputation as a Nobel Prize winner remains largely untarnished despite the above transgression. King is also an infamous example of a politician who was involved in extramarital affairs, as recounted in many of his biographies (e.g., Abernathy, 1989; Garrow, 1986; although the conclusions about the extent of his philandering is debatable, see Baldwin, 2016), making a case that the morals in marriage do not necessarily affect the credibility of political leaders with the public. From such points of view, not only can it be said that even reputable leaders may manifest various undesirable conducts and still be deemed trustworthy by the public, great leaders also seem to have a way with their supporters, suggesting that they possess a heightened ability to influence and impress, and possibly, manipulate. This also signifies an intricate interaction between leaders and followers.

In an attempt to explain why the masses are easily swayed by leaders with destructive traits, Lipman-Blumen (2005) posited that toxic leaders create grand illusions of an unrealistic future that are unconditionally positive for followers. According to Padilla, Hogan, and Kaiser (2007), one way for leaders to gain support

is to introduce the world as a place full of threats and insecurity, and then give the illusion that they are the only ones who can offer protection. This is done by introducing opponents as enemies through devaluation in order to reinforce followers' self-identity to the group they belong to. As an example, Doriane and Manon (2013) identified signs of toxicity in Steve Jobs's leadership style, showing how Jobs insisted on the strong identity of the Apple Corporation to motivate his employees. Through analysing Jobs's biography (Isaacson, 2011), they argued that Jobs demonstrated visible narcissistic tendencies, including the lack of empathy towards followers. Jobs was said to deliberately criticise and belittle his co-workers in public when they presented him with ideas. He also had a reputation of being obnoxious, when he refused to attend important meetings, made risky business decisions, and refused to give credit where due. Still, Jobs was greatly admired by Apple fans and many others whose lives were influenced by his products – those who perceive him as a charismatic and visionary leader with unique rhetoric skills, often eliciting great praise and applause from his audience at major events (Anisman-Razin & Kark, 2012). Some leaders seem to be able to tap into their followers' psychological motivations in order to exploit and marginalise them.

Drawing on Maslow's (1971) revised hierarchy of needs theoretical model, Lipman-Blumen (2004) proposed several basic psychological needs and primal fears that can be found among followers of destructive leaders: the need for authority, the need for security, the need to feel special, the need to belong, the fear of ostracism, and the fear of powerlessness. She argued that people crave illusions, and unlike benign leaders, toxic leaders are believed to be able to deliver visions that exploit such needs. Bandura (2002) and Zimbardo (2004) have reasoned that it is not necessarily the person who is morally disengaged, but rather the person develops an inclination for unethical behaviours when positioned in organisational structures that encourage its practice. Victims of toxic co-workers or superiors may possess certain characteristics that make them vulnerable targets, creating a toxic work environment where destructive behaviours manifest. Toxic attitudes can have a harmful impact on co-workers, where vulnerable employees who are susceptible to victimisation in the workplace often report negative work outcomes such as decreased work time, less commitment, performance decline, reduced work effort, and lower work quality, as well as reduced health and overall well-being (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2011).

Historically, it has long been observed that people with high levels of dark personalities, characterised by attributes of fearlessness and ruthlessness, gravitate towards professions that offer power. Dutton (2012), who created a list for the most and least attractive professions for psychopaths based on a survey he conducted, included clergyperson as one of the top ten jobs that have the most psychopaths. Interestingly, victims of psychopathy have pointed out that people high in psychopathy are often found in affinity groups such as religious, political or support groups of individuals who share common values, beliefs, and interests (Aftermath: Surviving Psychopathy Foundation, 2011). According to experiences of these victims, religious groups can be easy targets for manipulation because their members share qualities such as acceptance of newcomers from different backgrounds and lifestyles, as well as the belief in forgiving past wrongdoings. It is also said that the structure of many churches places spiritual leaders in positions of power which psychopaths can take advantage of, using such positions to prey on people who seek support from religious communities when they are at their most vulnerable.

The information presented above, albeit anecdotal, reflects the two-way dynamic relationship between a Dark Triad individual and the person or institution on the receiving end of their behaviour. It appears that there is an inclination for at least some individuals to unwittingly accept, condone, or even adulate people with high levels of dark personalities.

**Romantic Relationships**

With regard to romantic relationships, research has attempted to explain misguided relationship choices and there have been various postulations (mainly from an evolutionary perspective) about whether women are predisposed to finding men with Dark Triad personalities attractive. A study by Carter, Campbell, and Muncer (2014) reported that some women indeed found the Dark Triad personalities more attractive, and two possible explanations were offered. First, it was proposed that *sexual selection* may be at play. Evolutionarily speaking, when it comes to reproduction, women may respond to signals of "male quality", and this denotes confidence, stubbornness, and risk-taking tendencies – characteristics common among Dark Triad individuals. Second, *sexual conflict* may be at work. It was posited that women are more responsive to men's ability to promote themselves,

which is a practical tactic in the co-evolutionary 'arms race' which men use to convince women of their sexual prowess.

Rauthmann and Kolar (2013) conducted an experiment to find out people's perceptions of fictitious narcissists, Machiavellians, and psychopaths. It was found that people high in each of those Dark Triad traits were rated low on likeability, but the narcissist character was judged to be more appealing, compared to the other two traits. It was also pointed out that Western countries that subscribe to a more individualistic way of life may endorse rather narcissistic qualities such as leadership and boldness.

Another study that looked at mate appeal and preferences by Jauk et al. (2016) had heterosexual men and women take part in a three-minute speed-dating session after completing personality questionnaires. Confirming previous findings, high-scorers on the narcissism scale, both men and women, were viewed more favourably by the opposite sex for short-term trysts. Women were also likely to view men high in narcissism as potential future dates and partners for longer-term commitment. One of the arguments put forward by Jauk and colleagues is that the reason for this trend may have to do with other covariates – extraversion in particular. The results suggest that narcissism does seem to entail adaptive consequences in mating contexts, but it should be acknowledged that it is difficult to disentangle prosocial (e.g., confidence, sociability) and the antisocial (e.g., control, aggression) characteristics in these men.

In Florence Kaslow's 30 years of clinical practice she noticed a pattern among couples where one partner with a personality disorder commonly attracts one also with a personality disorder, but both parties appear to be on opposite ends of the mental disorder spectrum (Murray, 2004). For example, a self-absorbed person with Narcissistic Personality Disorder is often seen with a needy partner with dependent personality. Kaslow (1996) theorised that people with contrasting characters seem to have an attraction for each other as their personality patterns are complementary and reciprocal.

This view that opposites attract is also acknowledged in the public domain and the popular psychology industry. According to counselling psychotherapist Jacqui Marson, one theory suggests that people are drawn to positive qualities that they lack and yearn for because it makes them feel whole (Bhattacharya, 2011). Some women are attracted to driven, competitive men due to the lack of such

qualities in themselves.  Consistent with Marson's view, Rosenberg (2013) described this type of opposite attraction using the 'Human Magnet Syndrome' theory to explain why opposite but compatible companions are able to form enduring relationships.  Rosenberg provided an example of how patient and giving co-dependents are often attracted to selfish and controlling narcissists, suggesting that an unconscious force powerfully directs people's relationship choices.  Marson added that there is a powerful cultural mythology that surrounds the idea of women possessing the redemptive power to transform or 'fix' men with flaws; because women in romantic relationships believe that the Dark Triad men they love have the potential to become good.

According to Charis Wong, a marriage and family therapist, there are cases where women are inclined to fall for "bad men" due to unresolved childhood issues, as observed in her clinical practice (Brown, 2013).  Women who fall into the cycle of dating men who exploit them are usually from dysfunctional families, have fathers that may have had extramarital affairs, or may not have received enough attention from their fathers.  Wong argued that it is an unconscious decision that these women are attracted to the same type of men as their mothers had, due to the sense of familiarity.  It was added that women without a healthy image of themselves are inclined to think that they are not worthy of being with men who treat them well, often blaming themselves for the men's bad behaviour, which points to the idea that low self-esteem is one of the reasons why some women find people who have high levels of dark personalities attractive.

Although the observations discussed above may seem informative, they can be oversimplified for the purposes of explaining why some individuals repeatedly fall for people with destructive behaviours.  These patterns observed in clinical practice, however, appear to be in line with the Bowlby's (1969) theory of attachment, which stipulates that people develop patterns of relating to and interacting with others based on the quality of their early relationships with caregivers.  Empirical studies within the repeat interpersonal victimisation literature have suggested that exposure to trauma during childhood, for instance having been bullied or having witnessed violence, has consistent links to intimate partner violence victimisation (Linder & Collins, 2005; Renner & Slack, 2006; Whitfield, Anda, Dube, & Felitti, 2003).  Social learning theory can offer some explanation to this (e.g., Hare, Miga, & Allen, 2009; O'Leary, 1988), where it suggests that those

who have experienced aggression in childhood learn that aggression is an acceptable means to resolve conflict.

These ideas imply that it is not the case that Dark Triad individuals are perceived particularly favourably, but that psychosocial factors may lead some individuals to be more at risk to being drawn to situations that may put them in a higher likelihood of being exploited, or that some individuals tend to be more tolerant of exploitation by their romantic partners.

**Sex Differences: Women with High Levels of Dark Triad Personalities**

These individual differences in terms of both toleration of exploitation and perpetration of manipulation are often considered to be gender-specific. Much research has focused on men with high levels of Dark Triad personalities and the strategies they employ, because numerous studies have consistently found men to score higher than women on the traditional Dark Triad measures (Jonason, Li, & Buss, 2010; Jonason et al., 2009; Jonason & Webster, 2010).

However, there have been media reports of very successful women with high academic and professional achievements who present characteristics of a prototypical psychopathic personality. For example, a woman in her thirties who authored the autobiography *Confessions of a Sociopath: A Life Spent Hiding in Plain Sight* under the pen name M. E. Thomas has confessed that her success in the law profession is due to her manipulative, cunning self. Although Thomas (2013) admitted having trouble connecting with people beyond a superficial level, Thomas was confident that she is likeable and people are generally susceptible to her charm. In her book Thomas tells the accounts of some seemingly unpleasant deeds she has committed, from letting a baby opossum drown in her swimming pool to the time she cut all ties with a friend whose father was dying of cancer because she did not find the person fun to be around anymore, adding that she did not feel emotionally troubled or morally unjustified. The book also featured a psychological evaluation excerpt by John Edens, a psychology professor who stated that Thomas displayed attitudes emblematic of people with psychopathic traits, as she did not view herself as having a disorder, but instead seemed content with her lifestyle and blasé about the fact that her condition may cause distress in others. It should be noted that in her book Thomas recounted a life of psychopathy in the flat, mechanical precision of an individual ticking off boxes, suggesting that she may be a fraud. There could also be

an argument that the role of a psychopath is an adopted one, because being a psychopath could mean never having to be restricted by the fear of consequences. Nonetheless, the faking itself can be attributed to a circular argument: counterfeiting a psychopathic profile involves an act of compulsive lying, which may be considered a symptom of psychopathy.

A retrospective survey by Jones and Weiser (2014) has also uncovered psychopathic and Machiavellian tendencies as predictors of infidelity among women. The researchers argued that women high in Machiavellianism believe that they have the ability to successfully negotiate infidelity with fewer consequences by being convincingly apologetic and remorseful, as they tend to thrive even when tensions and emotions are running high. They will also resist cheating if short-term goals undermine long-term investments and exercise extreme caution when executing affairs. Unfaithful Machiavellians were said to cheat for strategic but not impulsive reasons. For example, the 'gene capturing' strategy posits that women seek to cultivate good genes from more dominant and alluring men while obtaining resources from more nurturing and financially stable men in order to raise a child (Blobel, 1985). By contrast, those with psychopathic traits are indiscriminately unfaithful, disregarding risks of getting caught. Therefore, unlike Machiavellians whose relationships did not end as a result of infidelity, psychopaths usually suffer from relationship dissolution. Weeks, Gambescia, and Jenkins (2003) found narcissism to be a predictor of infidelity, possibly due to narcissists' over-confident view that their partners do not live up to expectations hence making them entitled to seek alternatives (Foster, Shrira, & Campbell, 2006). However, the lack of association between narcissism and infidelity in Jones and Weiser's study could arise from the relationship choices women high in narcissism make, whereby such women are likely to only commit to high quality partners, hence infidelity is not taken as an option unless the extramarital partner brings sufficient ego rewards (Jonason, Luévano, & Adams, 2012).

It can be speculated that the nature of Dark Triad personalities in women, together with physical attributes, may influence other individuals' perception towards these women. Several aspects of narcissism, as seen in the Narcissistic Personality Inventory that measures subclinical narcissism, are directly related to physical appearance. This shows narcissists' high levels of vanity and their tendency to dress and adorn themselves in provocative, attention-grabbing ways (Vazire,

Naumann, Rentfrow, & Gosling, 2008). A controversial book, *Honey Money* by Catherin Hakim (2011) suggested that wise women use their sexuality and feminine wiles to get ahead in life. Indeed, younger, more beautiful women in the entertainment and hospitality industries seem to get more attention and opportunities compared with their less attractive counterparts, whilst less attractive, older men continue to be employed. Hakim argued that women are able to exploit their attractiveness and sexuality in order to succeed due to a 'universal male sex deficit', coming from the idea that men generally want to pursue more sex, regardless of age. Coining the term 'erotic capital', Hakim theorised from a radical pragmatism viewpoint that using sex appeal to move ahead is necessary in this sexualised age.

In fact, this point of view is not new and has been evident throughout history. Cleopatra VII, the last Pharaoh of Egypt who was celebrated for her beauty and intelligence, has been portrayed as a villainous, treacherous, and lecherous woman who used sexuality and powers of persuasion to entice two of the world's most powerful men, Julius Caesar and Mark Antony, to advance herself politically (Fletcher, 2008). Although the emphasis with Cleopatra's seduction is said to have caused her political and administrative acumen to be overlooked (Jones, 2006), it is a common impression in popular psychology that beauty and youth are commodities of women instead of wisdom, thus it is not surprising that wealthier, older men typically prefer much younger, attractive women, and research from evolutionary psychology has indeed lent support to this notion (Antfolk et al., 2015; Moore, Cassidy, & Perrett, 2010).

The speed-dating study by Jauk et al. (2016) as discussed earlier (see p. 30) found females high in narcissism and psychopathy to receive more favourable ratings from their male dating partners. The researchers of the study argued that explanation for such findings may not be directly linked to the Dark Triad traits, but could be due to factors that correlate with narcissism, such as extraversion (in men) and physical attractiveness (in women). With regard to this finding, it is unclear, yet, whether a woman's attractiveness results in an increased likelihood of developing narcissistic or psychopathic traits, or if higher narcissism or psychopathy generates efforts towards an attractive self-presentation. In line with this finding, in their sample comprising female clients of a hair and beauty salon, Egan and McCorkindale (2007) found narcissism and vanity to be highly related, and both are associated with mating effort.

Dark Triad tendencies, and in particular, narcissism, in women have indeed been found to be significant predictors of general and sexual competitiveness (Carter, Montanaro, Linney, & Campbell, 2015). What is more, in romantic relationships, people tend to display negative responses to attractive members of their own sex (Buunk, Massar, & Dijkstra, 2007) as highly attractive same-sex individuals pose as potent intrasexual rival over relationship prospects (Maner, Miller, Rouby, & Gailliot, 2009; Rhodes, 2006). This behaviour is very different from positive responses elicited by attractive opposite-sex targets (Agthe, Spörrle, & Försterling, 2008; Försterling, Preikschas, & Agthe, 2007). Agthe, Spörrle and Maner (2011) attempted to examine whether such responses are similar in decision-making within job recruitment and university admission contexts. It was found that attractive participants displayed a positive bias towards highly attractive opposite-sex candidates but discriminated against highly attractive same-sex targets, showing the role of gender differences in perception and demonstrating the biases that may arise in job-related outcomes.

Taken together, there are several points to be made. First, it might be the case that Dark Triad individuals, especially women, take better care of their personal appearance, in efforts to garner complements to bolster their self-views. Alternatively, similar to their male counterparts, high Dark Triad women are highly competitive and adorn themselves in order to succeed in securing desirable mates and at the same time limit the success of rivals. Besides, the manipulation tactics women high in Dark Triad traits employ seem to differ from the tactics employed by men. With the presence of such attractiveness and gender-related biases, as well as the competitive, manipulative attitudes and behaviour that women high on the Dark Triad measures possess, there can be serious consequences when it comes to relationship commitment or large-scale organisational decisions. It is therefore important to examine how people high in the Dark Triad traits are perceived, and how they perceive others.

## Adaptive Elements of the Dark Triad

The preceding discussion of women with Dark Triad traits is of importance because one of the most pronounced group difference in the Dark Triad research is in gender, with men consistently scoring higher than women in all three traits. That said, one interesting finding linked to narcissism is revealed. In her book Twenge

(2006) referred to a 'narcissism epidemic', and by comparing data from personality tests spanning decades, it was argued that the millennial cohort (i.e., born after 1982) in America are increasingly entitled, self-obsessed, and unprepared to face realities of adulthood (see also Lasch, 1979). Twenge believes that current trends such as the rise in plastic surgery and social networking are rooted in a single underlying shift in American culture, where youths today become more attention-seeking, lack emotional warmth, and treasure material wealth and physical appearance. Analysis by Twenge and Campbell (2009) found that Narcissistic Personality Inventory scores among college students had escalated significantly between 1979 and 2006, with two thirds of students in 2006 scoring above the scale's original sample mean in the 1970s, a 30% increase within merely two decades (for a review, see Twenge, Konrath, Foster, Campbell, & Bushman, 2008). More importantly, based on the datasets, it was reported that whilst men still score higher than women on average, the increase seems to be stronger for women than for men.

With the emergence of online social networks, Internet users expend more time and effort enhancing their virtual self-image and presenting themselves in a more positive light (Bergman, Fearrington, Davenport, & Bergman, 2011). At the same time, it was argued by Twenge (2006) that child-rearing has a role to play, where parents today instil high self-esteem in their children and the belief that they are special. Children who think they are special then grow up to be entitled adults who expect success, wealth, and fame to come quickly and easily.

There is a clear adaptive element to the Dark Triad – the underlying traits can be viewed as a particular social orientation towards others and may facilitate one's objectives, even if those objectives are purely self-rewarding. The premise that dark personalities are designed for the successful execution of social deception was discussed by Mealey (1995), who argued that sociopaths are a product of evolutionary pressures; the complex interaction between genetic and environmental factors lead these social predators to pursue manipulative life strategies.

The term 'social intelligence' or 'Machiavellian intelligence' was used by Whiten and Byrne (1988) to refer to the adaptive social manoeuvring within primates and humans, where social pressure drives humans to be socially smart. Intense social competition propels humans' cognitive abilities to evolve and develop increasingly sophisticated Machiavellian strategies as a means to be successful in the

emerging complex society. It seems that such behaviour patterns are a result of the constantly changing culture and the increased complexity of modern society.

As discussed previously, the rising narcissism in the current era has been argued to have serious negative implications on society. MacDonald (2014) asserted that collective narcissism is a form of negative cultural shift that is taking place and can be deeply rooted in an institution. As an example, members of parliament who can be fuelled by group greed and aggrandisement may make unethical decisions that are not in the true interest of the public. Both men and women today are encouraged to adopt various strategies for personal success, but this may come at the expense of others. If others unwittingly or passively allow this manipulation to occur, the cycle of victimisation can be difficult to break.

**Personality Traits Predictive of Vulnerability to Victimisation**

It is apparent from the discussions above that interpersonal interactions are not unidirectional, and very often all parties in a relationship, be it personal or work, play a role when a manipulation attempt occurs. Hence, it might be the case that some people have certain traits that are predictive of vulnerability to such social exploitation. This section covers a brief literature review on characteristics predictive of vulnerability to victimisation, drawing upon examples identified by research on peer harassment and violent victimisation. The literature presented here forms the basis of the Vulnerability Scale developed for the current research project, which is a scale intended to assess vulnerability to victimisation.

Very few past studies have operationalised vulnerability, but vulnerability in the bullying literature can be understood as being susceptible to physical or psychological assault or harm (Olweus, 1993). A growing line of research that looked into victims of violent crimes has suggested that some victims may have been targeted because they demonstrated signs of vulnerability, such as walking style (Book, Costello, & Camilleri, 2013; Gunns, Johnston, & Hudson, 2002). In studies of peer harassment and bullying behaviour, it was found that children who bully are often attracted to victims who expose traits that identify themselves as being vulnerable (Stoody, 2000).

Research grounded in the five-factor taxonomy of personality has suggested that certain traits are predictive of vulnerability in people who fall victim to various types of manipulation. Symptoms of depression and anxiety, low self-regard, lack of

humour, social withdrawal, gullibility, readiness to trust others, a high sense of inadequacy, as well as low assertiveness are some of the characteristics frequently associated with vulnerability to victimisation (D'Esposito, Blake, & Riccio, 2011; Hawker & Boulton, 2000). Such characteristics manifest as the outcomes of harassment, and are said to reinforce and further invite attacks against the victims, creating a vicious cycle (Hodges, Boivin, Vitaro, & Bukowski, 1999; Rubin, Coplan, & Bowker, 2009). Crawford and Manassis (2011) agreed that it is possible that anxiety and victimisation exacerbate one another over time, but it is still unclear what factors initiate the cycle.

Children with an anxious temperament have also been known to be submissive and less likely to retaliate or fight back (Olweus, 1995; Shorey et al., 2011). There have been reports that adverse effects (e.g., anxiety and depression) of having been teased as a child persist into adolescent years (Roth, Coles, & Heimberg, 2002). It also appears that there is a significant positive relationship between the severity of childhood victimisation and degree of adult depressive symptoms (Moore et al., 2017). As a result, the manifestation of such characteristics may affect a person's interpersonal relationship in adulthood, making the individual more susceptible to victimisation by social predators in intimate or workplace relationships.

There have been studies suggesting that another personal characteristic that can contribute to exploitation is a propensity toward credulity and gullibility (Greenspan, 2005; Greenspan, Loughlin, & Black, 2001). Credulity pertains to a willingness to believe in people or things despite the absence of reasonable proof, whereas gullibility is the susceptibility to being manipulated or deceived, either repeatedly or in the presence of obvious warning signs. Although there are various factors that may lie beneath credulous and gullible behaviours, particularly cognitive impairment (Pinsker, McFarland, & Stone, 2011), there are people without any known neurological condition who are susceptible to being exploited. It seems reasonable to believe that people with such characteristics are more prone to tolerating destructive behaviours and falling victim to people high in Dark Triad traits.

In short, the literature suggests that some people make prime targets for victimisation. An aspect the current project aimed to look at in more detail is the characteristics that are associated with this susceptibility to being victimised.

In a study, Sakaguchi and Hasegawa (2006) created point-light representations of female walkers' gait, and had male raters rate the probability of approaching a target walker for unexpected or unwanted sexual advances. They found that those who were selected as likely targets for inappropriate touching were those who rated themselves as neurotic, introverted, and shy. Based on these findings, one could argue on the basis of victimology studies that men who approach women with the intention of engaging in favours that may be against the woman's will are likely to deliberately seek out introverted or shy women, because the displayed shyness is typically perceived as a sign of vulnerability. This seems to suggest that some men are skilled at identifying unacquainted women's vulnerability merely from gait information and through brief observations, which then raises the question of how an individual assesses others' personality traits.

In another study by Sakaguchi and Hasegawa (2007), Japanese female students answered the NEO Five-Factor Personality Inventory and the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory that measures the willingness to engage in casual, uncommitted sexual relationships. They were also asked about the frequency of being a target for unexpected, explicit sexual advances from strangers. Those who have been frequently targeted for being approached with sexual intentions reported elevated Sociosexual Orientation Inventory scores, suggesting that men seem to be able to identify women with unrestricted sociosexuality (i.e., short-term oriented, willingness to engage in sexual relationships without emotional involvement), and select them for quick sexual access. Those who have been regularly targeted for nonsexual advances were high in agreeableness according to their self-report personality test, which is posited to be one of the traits of vulnerability. In other words, males seem to be attracted to women who appear to be sexually indiscriminate as well as women who look vulnerable.

Given these points, it might be the case that those who regularly engage in the manipulation and exploitation of others target specific individuals with tell-tale traits of being vulnerable, and yet little is known about how they identify the vulnerability of the potential "victim". Even less is known about how such "victims" perceive incidences of manipulation when they do occur, particularly when the manipulator is high in Dark Triad traits.

The next few sections draws upon existing literature to examine whether individuals high in Dark Triad traits are indeed adept at assessing traits associated

with vulnerability in others.  Key questions include how they make such assessments, and how this affects their attitudes and future behaviour.

### The Dark Triad and Accuracy in Judging Vulnerability

Interpersonal sensitivity, or the accuracy in judging other people's personality traits and affective states, has been a popular research topic for almost a century (Hall, Andrzejewski, Murphy, Schmid Mast, & Feinstein, 2008).  Interpersonal sensitivity shows a link to different aspects of psychosocial functioning and is deemed an important skill for people to engage in interpersonally appropriate behaviour (Hall, Andrzejewski, & Yopchick, 2009).  The existing literature of interpersonal judgement includes evaluation of personality traits, emotions, intentions, and deception in various contexts, and has shown both individual and situational differences that influence a person's judgement accuracy (Demetrioff, 2013).

It has been assumed that some people are naturally more attuned to decoding body language than others (Ambady, Hallahan, & Rosenthal, 1995).  According to Holmes and Holmes (2009), serial murderer Ted Bundy made numerous remarks that he was able to tell a victim by the way she walked, the tilt of her head, and how she carried herself.  While this could be interpreted as Bundy talking himself up, it may be an indication that offenders do observe socially relevant cues when searching for potential victims.

Some convicted offenders have disclosed that they target victims who offer adequate reward for minimal effort, suggesting that victims may give off certain impressions specifying vulnerability (Farrell, Phillips, & Pease, 1995).  Grayson and Stein (1981) proposed that potential victims may be signalling their vulnerability to assailants through bodily movements.  In their study, individuals were filmed walking down a street, and male assault offenders were asked to rate how easy or difficult it would be to attack each walker based on the silent video.  An analysis of the relationship between movement styles and vulnerability to physical assault revealed that people could be differentiated according to ease-of-attack based on their walking styles.

However, it has to be acknowledged that the offenders could have based their vulnerability ratings on other visual properties available on the video clips, such as attractiveness and clothing style (Johnston, 2013).  Gunns et al. (2002) replicated the

said study and reported similar results; there was a strong agreement between student participants as to who would be considered vulnerable to attack. It was also reported that clothing and footwear style had an impact on walking styles which could account for difference in ease-of-attack ratings. For example, tight skirts and high heels constrain movement which may increase one's tendency to walk in a style indicative of high vulnerability. Murzynski and Degelman (1996) trained female confederates to take on either high-vulnerability or low-vulnerability walking styles based on findings from Grayson and Stein's (1981) study, and discovered that undergraduate students and police officers could successfully identify vulnerability to sexual assault through walking patterns.

Other researchers have evaluated specific personality attributes of the targets and the raters' judgement accuracy. Richards, Rollerson, and Phillips (1991) showed male participants video clips of women being interviewed by male confederates. The topics of interview comprised debatable current issues and the male confederates were to argue against whatever position taken by the female participant. The male participants were then asked to rate the female's level of submissiveness and also identify which women they would most likely approach if they had to make her do something she refused to. The participants were able to tell apart women who differed on the personality variable of dominance versus submissiveness using cues from body movements and clothing: submissive women dressed themselves in more body-concealing outfit and adopted less expansive movements. Such findings support the notion that non-verbal behaviour is generally a reliable predictor of vulnerability. A precondition of submissiveness seems to increase the likelihood of victimisation.

Some scholars have proposed that psychopaths are capable of using socially relevant information to detect vulnerability, an argument that is supported by a number of studies that found that those diagnosed with psychopathy have insight into others' mental state (e.g., Richell et al., 2003). Based on this assertion, Book, Quinsey, and Langford (2007) hypothesised that psychopaths are unlikely to show impairments in making judgements about emotion or vulnerability in other people. After prison inmates and community participants were shown videos of targets interacting with a confederate for two minutes, they were asked to evaluate the target's degree of assertiveness, which was indicative of vulnerability for the study. Participants were also required to judge and rank the intensity of emotions on 20

photographs of human faces. Participants with high psychopathy scores were able to assess the target's degree of assertiveness more accurately. Nor did they show any deficit in categorising facial expressions. As a matter of fact, they performed better than non-psychopaths when rating the intensity of emotions.

Wheeler, Book, and Costello (2009) had male students watch 12 video clips of targets walking in a hallway, and afterward provide ratings of the potential victims' perceived vulnerability to being mugged. The proxy measure of vulnerability was previous records of victimisation. Findings of this study reported that males with high psychopathy scores were accurate at identifying individuals who had previously been victimised. When asked to elucidate reasons for their ratings regarding each target, people high in psychopathic traits seemed to be unable to articulate specific cues used to make their decisions. Wheeler and colleagues did not find this unexpected as previous studies have found that convicted criminals had trouble explaining the criteria they used for victim selection (Amir, 1971). Although this study may have been limited by the use of a student sample, it is clear that individuals with high psychopathic traits may not necessarily be involved in criminal activities, but still have a strong ability to prey on vulnerable people in day-to-day social interactions through the use of socially relevant information.

The literature above suggests that people with more socially aversive tendencies seem to notice details about others' physical appearance, facial and bodily movements, and outfit, among other things, and make various inferences based on this information, even though such information is often scarce and incomplete. This can have serious implications in the work context because very often the first contact is at the interview where individuals high on the Dark Triad scales are able to make inferences about the interviewer and then utilise manipulation strategies. As efficient manipulators, they are able to execute their tactics successfully even when the interviews are conducted by experts, suggesting that depending on what they take these cues to mean, those high in Dark Triad traits can subsequently modify how they behave towards others. Given that such inferences have a lasting impact and may affect their attitudes and subsequent behaviour towards others, understanding how individuals high in Dark Triad traits interpret the actions and emotions of others in social interactions is a key to deciphering manipulative relationships.

The existing research seemed to focus on male offenders and those with psychopathic tendencies. A sensible next step is to expand this line of research to individuals high in Machiavellianism and narcissism within a non-forensic context.

It is recognised, from the discussions above, that individuals high on the Dark Triad measures are cunning, expert manipulators, and that they are likely to be able to pick up on signs of vulnerability in others. For that reason, it would be helpful if one could identify traces of Dark Triad characteristics, in order to prevent falling victim to such individuals in the first place. This raises the interesting question of whether individuals high in psychopathy, Machiavellianism, and narcissism adopt unique patterns in terms of how they express themselves. The next and final section provides a brief literature review on the language characteristics of those high in Dark Triad traits.

### The Language of Individuals High in Dark Triad Personalities

In the existing literature, individuals with psychopathic traits have been studied extensively and they are often portrayed to be excellent storytellers who are experts in conning others. 'Glib' is a word that often appears in the description of a psychopath (e.g., Cleckley, 1941; Hare, 1993), indicating that people high in psychopathy tend to be verbally facile.

Using the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC; Pennebaker, Francis, & Booth, 2001) computer software, Hancock, Woodworth, Morrow, McGillivray, and Boochever (2012), examined interview transcripts from an earlier study by Woodworth and Porter (2002), where violent offenders had recounted a positive experience, a negative experience, and their offense. Their observation suggested that psychopaths used more first person singular pronouns, consistent with the narcissistic tendency to focus on themselves. In the same paper, Hancock and his team had students take part in a similar study design to explore if it was possible to detect psychopathy in non-criminal samples. Students with high psychopathy scores used fewer anxiety-related words, suggesting that this lack of emotional language could be due to the emotional deficiency that is typical in psychopathy. There was no narcissism-related pronoun correlation. However, the use of the first person plural "*we*" was positively correlated with psychopathy scores, consistent with the findings where psychopaths used more plural self-reference when speaking about negative events to disassociate the self with the account.

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Using the same software, Boochever (2012) looked at the relationship between undergraduates' psychopathy scores and the text in their e-mails, text messages, and Facebook messages and found that those with higher psychopathic ratings used language differently from those low in psychopathy. Students with high psychopathy ratings were less honest, cursed more, and used more anger-related words. They also produced less comprehensible text and adopted psychologically distancing language, which is believed to reflect emotional deficits and disagreeableness fundamental to the psychopathic personality.

At surface level, the brief literature review presented above demonstrates that speech patterns of people with psychopathic tendencies have distinctive characteristics. However, a main point to note is that current research trends on language use rely rather heavily on automated analysis programmes to examine human communication, on the assumption that this facilitates "unbiased" data collection. Ultimately such linguistic analysis applications identify linguistic patterns by counting the frequency of these patterns relative to a control language, providing an idea as to the type of language adopted by people with different personalities (Pennebaker & Graybeal, 2001).

If the findings are examined closely, there seems to be very little evidence to support these researchers' interpretation. For instance, in the study by Boochever (2012) discussed above, honesty was assessed by a combined use of first person singular pronouns and exclusive words, and fewer negative emotion words – a definition set out by Newman, Pennebaker, Berry, and Richards (2003). This contention was based on the notion that when a person tells a truth, not only are they more likely to "own" it by making it more personal, they are also likely to describe their story in a more cognitively complex way. The problem here becomes rather clear – this form of subjective interpretation appears to be no different from analysing data qualitatively. As such big data is being analysed using language analysis engines that are unable to capture subtle realities of informal human communication, one can argue that in reality researchers may know even *less* about people's personality when using such approaches. This is not an attempt to discredit the findings noted above, but it demonstrates that the field would benefit from alternative ways of understanding the Dark Triad.

It is reasonable, however, to speculate that people high on the Dark Triad measures may communicate differently from others. To understand whether the

speech content and style of such individuals can convey their personality, one main aim of the current project was to qualitatively examine the way individuals high on the Dark Triad scale communicate.  This is done using an idiographic, case-based method.

## Summary

The literature review in this chapter leads to the interesting question of how Dark Triad individuals make use of their words, body language, and emotional expressions to evaluate and manipulate people.  For instance, psychopaths who are largely devoid of emotions seem to be able to adopt various masks, such as appearing empathic and remorseful to talk their way out of being reprimanded (Porter, ten Brinke, Baker, & Wallace, 2011).  This warrants further research to explore the factors that make people high in Dark Triad traits successful, and the circumstances that may eventually lead to their downfall.

**Chapter 2:    Current Directions in the Literature and the Present Project**

**Issues with Measurement and Analysis of the Dark Triad**

After having detailed the theoretical and empirical literature of the Dark Triad in the previous chapter, it is perhaps clear that there are signs of conceptual redundancy and confusion.  The main aim of this chapter is to highlight the current directions and several impediments in researching this area, in the hope of providing a clearer rationale behind the variables, measures, and methodologies which were used in this overall research project.

The majority of Dark Triad research has utilised standard non-clinical questionnaires, of which the validity and reliability have been substantiated with empirical evidence.  However, the shortcomings of each instrument have been highlighted.

**Machiavellianism**

There have been concerns regarding social desirability response bias for MACH-IV, the primary form of assessment for Machiavellianism.  These limitations become evident when items are appraised qualitatively.  Moss (2005) argued that people typically find it difficult to respond to statements such as "*Never tell anyone the real reason you did something unless it is useful to do* so" or "*Most people forget more easily the death of their parents than the loss of their property*" due to social desirability bias.  However, Christie and Geis (1970) pointed out that the fact that respondents endorse Machiavellian items not only reflects their Machiavellian orientations, it also signifies the willingness of high Machiavellians to agree with socially undesirable statements.

Besides response bias, another limitation of the MACH-IV is the lack of clear psychometric properties and low construct validity (Hunter et al., 1982; Panitz, 1989).  During the construction of the scale, Christie and Geis classified the MACH-IV items into three themes: deceitful interpersonal tactics, a cynical view of human nature, and a disregard for morality.  Dahling, Whitaker, and Levy (2009) criticised the unidimensional scoring of the MACH-IV scale despite its multidimensional nature.  To address this, some studies have analysed each component of the MACH-IV by obtaining separate scores as well as using a combined score (e.g., O'Hair & Cody, 1987; Steininger & Eisenberg, 1976); however these studies have ended up

with different dimensions depending on the outcome of their factor analyses. Furthermore, the morality component suggested by Christie and Geis, represented only by two items, has been subjected to criticism and these two items are often excluded by researchers because not only do they show low correlations with other items, but factor analyses of all items have typically only yielded two factors, namely tactics and views (Ahmed & Stewart, 1981; O'Hair & Cody, 1987).

**Psychopathy**

Three most common self-report measures of psychopathy have been mentioned in Chapter 1: the Self-Report Psychopathy Scale – Fourth Edition (SRP 4; Paulhus et al., 2016), the Levenson Self-Report Psychopathy Scale (LSRP; Levenson et al., 1995), and the Psychopathic Personality Inventory (PPI; Lilienfeld & Andrews, 1996). A review by Hicklin and Widiger (2005) found that total scores on the SRP and PPI measure similar constructs, whereas the LSRP has more in common with measures of Antisocial Personality Disorder. The criticisms of the PPI have been discussed in Chapter 1 .

Additionally, given the propensity of psychopaths to lie, self-ratings of people on the psychopathy scale can be deemed questionable. That said, the use of self-report questionnaires to detect psychopathy has shown to be considerably more fruitful than once thought (for a review, see Patrick, 2006).

Furthermore, in most cases, non-ideal circumstances mean insufficient time and resources for researchers to make use of lengthy multi-item instruments with improved content validity and reliability. Due to the nature of the participants involved, especially considering that individuals high in psychopathy and Machiavellianism are likely to lose interest easily if they do not gain anything from doing the given task, more protracted measures increase chances of participant fatigue and annoyance.

**Narcissism**

It is generally agreed that there are different types of narcissism: the grandiose and the vulnerable (Wink, 1991), but current theoretical and empirical data have presented mixed results as to whether the grandiosity displayed by narcissists is genuine or a façade (for a review, see Bosson et al., 2008).

The majority of studies use the self-report Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Hall, 1979) as a measurement of narcissism, and the NPI is said to focus exclusively on the grandiose themes rather than vulnerable components (Cain et al., 2008; Rose, 2002). Lee and Ashton (2005) also pointed out that two subscales within the NPI, namely entitlement and exploitation, correlated with Machiavellianism and primary psychopathy, indicating that several facets in the NPI are not represented within the other two Dark Triad traits. Due to the different scales and methods used in research, the strengths of the correlations among the traits may vary depending on how each construct is conceptualised.

Some researchers have also questioned the adequacy of the NPI in the assessment of narcissism, on the basis that items on the scale measure seem to be confounded with self-esteem (Rosenthal & Hooley, 2010) and correlated with extraversion (Miller, Gaughan, Pryor, Kamen, & Campbell, 2009). For this reason, it is worthwhile to consider the extent such normative or potentially psychologically healthy qualities should play a role in the operationalisation of narcissism. If one supposes that the primary purpose of the NPI is to measure less extreme levels of narcissism based on the clinical criteria for Narcissistic Personality Disorder (Raskin & Hall, 1979), and not seek a normative conceptualisation of narcissism, it would be problematic to interpret the findings from the use of the scale at surface level. There have been suggestions that one use independent scales measuring grandiosity and entitlement instead of the NPI (Brown, Budzek, & Tamborski, 2009) to provide a more accurate picture of traits that reflect narcissistic tendencies.

**Concise Measures of the Dark Triad**

To date, two shortened measures have been opted by researchers who prefer brevity. One is the Dark Triad 'Dirty Dozen' (DTDD; Jonason & Webster, 2010), which consists of only four items for each Dark Triad construct. According to the authors, this 12-item version incorporates the flexibility of being scored either as three interrelated subscales or as one single, composite scale. Jonason and colleagues have repeatedly maintained that the DTDD has good convergent validity with models of personality (Jonason, Kaufman, Webster, & Geher, 2013; Jonason & McCain, 2012) and stable psychometric properties (Jonason & Luévano, 2013; Webster & Jonason, 2013). The shortening of the Dark Triad scale has been criticised by other researchers who argue that this process may have removed

essential content, disputing its construct validity (Lee et al., 2013). Miller et al. (2012) posited that the psychopathy subscale of the DTDD is too narrow to cover traits central to psychopathy, most notably antagonism and disinhibition.

The other measure is the Short Dark Triad (SD3; Jones & Paulhus, 2014). A 27-item scale, it has been reported to have broader predictive power as compared to the DTDD (Egan, Chan, & Shorter, 2014). Nevertheless, Maples, Lamkin, and Miller (2014) reported that the narcissism subscale in SD3 is more specifically related to grandiose narcissism. Maples and colleagues also concluded that both the DTDD and SD3 are efficient in measuring the Dark Triad traits, but the SD3 reported stronger convergent and incremental validity, making it a more promising instrument.

## Everyday Sadism

In more recent years, Chabrol, van Leeuwen, Rodgers, and Séjourné (2009) called for a fourth construct, sadism, to be incorporated into a new 'Dark Tetrad' of personality, asserting its ability to predict antisocial behaviour in adolescents and its moderate correlation with the Dark Triad. To test this, Buckels, Jones, and Paulhus (2013) conducted two studies under laboratory conditions to investigate sadistic personality. The first study involved a bug-killing paradigm, in which participants were tasked with dropping insects into a bug-grinding machine. Participants who actively chose to participate in the bug-killing task scored the highest on sadism. The second study assessed participants' willingness to harm an innocent other. It was found that sadism, along with psychopathy, narcissism, and low empathy predicted unprovoked aggression towards an innocent victim. However, only sadists chose to intensify their attack when they were aware that the innocent person would not retaliate, even at a cost of time and effort. The results showed that sadism predicted aggression independently even after its overlap with the Dark Triad was controlled for, providing support for the inclusion of sadism into the taxonomy of dark personalities.

## Ethical Complexities in Research on Dark Personalities

Undoubtedly, studies on dark personalities present some ethical considerations. Researchers need to be mindful about using appropriate methodologies to effectively examine dark behaviours while keeping any harmful

effects on participants to a minimum. With this in mind, the research approach for the current project and the rationale for the research questions, data collection, and interpretation of results are set out below. The choice of methods is also explained.

As sadism is yet to be routinely included in the research of aversive personality traits, and it is also arguably an aspect of personality that is more morally upsetting and dangerous, this construct has been excluded in the current project. Moreover, as the majority of items on psychopathy measures are statements that describe antisocial behaviours, and despite not being a diagnostic tool, participants who complete such instruments may end up with a self-diagnosis that may be a cause of concern for them. Accordingly, a full debrief has to be conducted to eliminate any misconceptions and unease that the participants have about the research.

Another difficulty with studying this topic area is the amount of time and effort required to complete multiple measures of dark personalities. Although there are shorter measures available, there is a trade-off between brevity and validity. Given the complexity of each Dark Triad trait and their relationships among one another, it was concluded that the shorter measures are unable to capture such subtleties. Therefore, the current project used the standard self-report measures of each Dark Triad trait, namely the MACH-IV (Christie & Geis, 1970), the Self-Report Psychopathy Scale – Fourth Edition (SRP 4; Paulhus et al., 2016), and the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1988). It is important to recognise the complexity and slight nuance of the Dark Triad instead of pursuing an agenda that could reduce and oversimplify information.

### Research Aims for the Current Project

As a starting point for the discussions of each study, the unificationist approach is refuted. This refutation draws on the contention that each Dark Triad trait is associated with different behavioural outcomes. Having said that, it is plausible that Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism are tied together in some respects whereas not in others. Therefore, one of the goals of the current project was to identify in which contexts and to what extent these traits show overlap. It was expected that, due to different theoretical conceptualisations, differences among the three traits would emerge when studied both nomothetically and idiographically. The rationale behind the inclusion of both nomothetic and idiographic approaches was that both are appropriate for description, for prediction,

for documenting interrelationships among the three Dark Triad traits, and for developing and/or testing specific hypotheses.

The existing literature has tended to focus on the role of Dark Triad individuals or manipulators and their behavioural outcomes, with little emphasis on the individuals who are passively or actively involved in the manipulation. However, it is clear that the ways in which people perceive and react to manipulative (or ingratiating) behaviours play a major role. This stresses the role of the interaction between the exploitative Dark Triad individual and the recipient. Through understanding people's appraisals of situations or incidents that portray interpersonal manipulation, the current project sought to provide new insights into the dynamics of social victimisation and exploitation.

In this mixed methods approach, three single studies were conducted to address the two main research aims above. A mixed method approach was adopted because it is able to offer a greater diversity of perspectives on a single research area. This methodological approach is built on the premise that it can be more fruitful to merge the strengths of quantitative *and* qualitative approaches, given that some questions are difficult to answer by using a single method (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

A brief overview of each study is presented below, and details of each study are discussed in their corresponding chapters.

**Study 1**

The first study is presented in Chapter 4. Study 1 sought to determine the ways in which people high in the Dark Triad constructs assess others, and how accurate they are in such assessments. As discussed in Chapter 1, several studies have concluded that people high in psychopathy are accurate in their assessment of vulnerability in others, but there has been limited research looking at Machiavellianism and narcissism. In a study by Black (2013) that did include all three constructs, it was suggested that people high in Dark Triad traits generally view everyone as being vulnerable to victimisation, but given that people do not always score high in all three traits, it was expected that there may be some variations in the way personality and vulnerability are assessed among those three traits.

Based on Ambady and Rosenthal's (1992) 'thin slice' paradigm (i.e., observation of a small selection of an interaction), Study 1 was designed to test

vulnerability judgement accuracy and judgement tendency of Dark Triad individuals. Participants who completed Dark Triad measures viewed four brief video clips of dyadic interactions. They were asked to judge the personality traits, emotional states, and vulnerability of individuals shown in the clips. They were also asked to report the cues they used in these judgements.

**Study 2**

The second study is presented in Chapter 5. Study 2 aimed to identify the characteristics of individuals who seemingly enable and abet people high in Dark Triad traits. According to Lipman-Blumen (2004), humans have basic psychological needs for authority, order, security, and belonging that people high in the Dark Triad traits meet. It seems that these needs that people possess place them in a vulnerable position, where they passively allow themselves to be victimised or exploited. While people high in Dark Triad traits are equipped with the heightened ability to exploit others' desires or fears, it must however be noted that social manipulation can only occur if people enable such behaviour.

Accordingly, in order to uncover the traits predictive of vulnerability to social manipulation, a Vulnerability Scale was developed and administered to a different participant pool. The associations between vulnerability and the Big Five personality traits were explored using correlation analyses. Vignettes were used in Study 2 to elicit participants' perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes towards scenarios depicting the interplay between Dark Triad individuals and their 'enablers'.

**Study 3**

The third study is presented in Chapter 6. Study 3 used a non-statistical text analysis to examine the features of personal narratives provided by people on the high end of the Dark Triad spectrum. The use of different forms of assessment including interviews, psychometrics, technical abilities tests, presentations, and reference checking has now become a standard approach in organisations' selection processes in order to measure skills and personality types. Personality assessments, in particular, are widely used as a screening tool during recruitment (Youngman, 2017). However, previous discussions have shown that people with high levels of Dark Triad traits often appear as desirable potential candidates and are more likely to

be hired to hold high positions in organisations, showing how difficult it is for employers to make desirable recruitment decisions by merely relying on personality batteries and questionnaires. It may be more fruitful to move away from such assessments and placing some emphasis on the verbal behaviour of Dark Triad individuals.

Previous research has focused on speech patterns among psychopaths using quantitative data and statistical procedures, thus Study 3 aimed to expand on the previous literature by including the examination of language use in all three Dark Triad traits using a person-specific, idiographic approach (i.e., the study of intraindividual variation). Life story interviews were conducted on four individuals who scored very high (relative to other participants in the sample in which these individuals were drawn from) on at least one of the Dark Triad measures. The transcripts were analysed using text analysis.

### Contribution and Practical Implications of the Current Project

Through the understanding of the strategies used by people high on the Dark Triad measures to facilitate the identification of vulnerability, the unique language patterns they adopt, as well as the ways in which they are perceived by others, researchers may have a better understanding of the dynamics in the interpersonal relationships between Dark Triad individuals and their enablers, and thus develop ways for people to avoid falling victim to such individuals. It is also hoped that this project is an important addition to one's understanding of people high in Dark Triad traits.

More specifically, the findings from this piece of work would have an applied value within an occupational context. Acknowledging the fact that people high on the Dark Triad scales will generally lie about their experiences, the analysis of how they verbally express themselves may help workplaces identify potential destructive employees. Although it is acknowledged that Dark Triad tendencies can be fairly adaptive and conducive to organisational success, it is generally more advantageous to minimise the incidence of Dark Triad employees due to problems they can cause in the long-term. Another outcome may be the implementation of strategies to manage such individuals so that the majority of the employees are protected. It should be kept in mind that the analyses used in this project are not intended to be used in place of the existing assessment methods used in the

organisational recruitment process, but to shed light on the complexity of the matter and how the simplicity of existing analyses in this area may limit the ways in which the characteristics of a person can be better understood.

**Chapter 3:     Initial Phase – Participant Recruitment and Preliminary Analyses**

## Introduction

The primary aim of the current research project was to understand Dark Triad personalities in interpersonal situations, specifically how individuals high in Dark Triad traits perceive others, how people perceive those high in Dark Triad traits, as well as the language characteristics of those high in Dark Triad traits.  The first step was to identify people who are high in Dark Triad traits as well as those who are more vulnerable to Dark Triad personalities.

To reduce respondent fatigue, the project was conducted in two phases.  The Initial Phase was aimed at recruiting participants from two independent samples.

## Method

**Participants**

**Dark Triad.**  One hundred and fifty-nine participants (50 males, 109 females) completed each of the self-report Dark Triad measures, namely MACH-IV (Christie & Geis, 1970), Self-Report Psychopathy Scale – Fourth Edition (SRP 4; Paulhus et al., 2016) and Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1988).  Participants from this sample were mainly students and academics from Edinburgh Napier University, professionals employed in white-collar occupations, and members of the general public.  Circular emails were sent to university staff members by the Faculty Director of Research.  With the use of social networking sites, the research project was also advertised to contacts known to the researcher who were working in the corporate banking and legal sector.  Through this, the snowball sampling method was adopted, whereby the recruitment of future participants was based on word-of-mouth or referrals from the existing participants.  This sampling was to ensure a representative sample, given that people with subclinical levels of the Dark Triad, for example psychopathy, are more common in the corporate sphere (Babiak & Hare, 2006).  University students and members of the public were recruited using an opportunity sampling by means of posters and leaflets.

**Vulnerability.**  A different sample of 144 participants (40 males, 104 females) was administered the Vulnerability Scale (VS; Chung & Charles, 2016) and

the Big Five Inventory (BFI; John & Srivastava, 1999).  Participants were ranked according to their Vulnerability Scale scores from the lowest to highest (*Mdn* = 49.00, *M* = 47.69, *SD* = 11.22, range 21 – 81).  Participants were categorised into low and high vulnerability groups after performing a median-split.  Participants with scores below the median were categorised as the *low vulnerability group* while those with scores above the median were categorised as the *high vulnerability group*.  The act of dichotomising is deemed viable for the purposes of this project because the data were intended to be subject to extreme group analysis (DeCoster, Iselin, & Gallucci, 2009).  Participants in this sample were recruited online through Psychology research websites and from Edinburgh Napier University using convenience sampling.

**Materials**

     **MACH-IV.**  The MACH-IV (Christie & Geis, 1970) is a questionnaire with 20 items developed to assess a person's level of Machiavellianism (Appendix 1.1).  It uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to measure one's willingness and tendency to manipulate others for self-gain, and perhaps at the expense of others.  Ten items are keyed to endorse Machiavellianism whereas the remaining 10 are keyed in the opposite direction.  After reverse-scoring the appropriate items, the sum of all items is calculated.  The total scores range from 20 to 140, with higher scores reflecting greater levels of Machiavellianism.  Christie and Geis introduced a classification system: nine statements refer to Machiavellian *tactics*, such as the use of flattery and deceit in social interactions (e.g., *Never tell anyone the real reason you did something unless it is useful to do so*); nine items denote one's *views* of human nature, predominantly a global cynical view in which people are thought to be weak and untrustworthy (e.g., *The biggest difference between most criminals and other people is that criminals are stupid enough to get caught*); and two items are concerned with conventional *morality* (e.g., *People suffering from incurable diseases should have the choice of being put painlessly to death*).  There are no known well-established cut-off scores for this measure.

     Since its development in 1970, the MACH-IV has yet to be revised extensively.  Despite studies reporting inconsistent reliability with reported coefficients as low as 0.46 (White, 1984), the use of the MACH-IV scale is generally accepted as its construct operationalisation permits researchers to make theoretically-

based predictions (Fehr et al., 1992). Vleeming's (1979) review on Machiavellianism studies since the introduction of the concept concluded that, in line with Christie and Geis's (1970) conceptualisation of Machiavellianism, high Machiavellians indulge in more manipulation behaviours, gain more winnings, persuade others more but are less prone to being persuaded. Jones and Paulhus (2009) echoed this contention in their literature review, as did Ramanaiah, Byravan, and Detwiler (1994) in their empirical study, confirming the construct validity of the MACH-IV as initially proposed by Christie and Geis. Considering its success in predicting manipulative tendencies within university, community, and organisational context, it is justifiable to use the MACH-IV as a measurement of Machiavellianism.

**Self-Report Psychopathy Scale – Fourth Edition (SRP 4).** The full-length SRP 4 (Paulhus et al., 2016) is a 64-item self-report measure that assesses the four facets of psychopathy: Interpersonal Manipulation, Callous Affect, Erratic Lifestyle, and Criminal Tendencies (Appendix 1.2). The *Interpersonal Manipulation* facet taps into characteristics such as manipulating others for selfish purposes, using superficial charm and deceit (e.g., *I purposely flatter people to get them on my side*); the *Callous Affect* facet describes shallow emotions, lack of remorse, guilt, or empathy (e.g., *People cry way too much at funerals*); the *Erratic Lifestyle* facet reflects a self-indulgent, reckless, and impulsive lifestyle (e.g., *I keep getting in trouble for the same things over and over*); and the *Criminal Tendencies* facet measures antisocial tendencies such as preference for rule-breaking, violence, and criminal behaviours (e.g., *I was convicted of a serious crime*). Participants respond to the statements on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), and all items are added to obtain four subscale scores as well as a total score. The four non-overlapping subscales contain 16 items each. Summing over all items gives a possible range from 64 to 320.

There are SRP scales that have previously been developed as a self-report counterpart to the Psychopathy Checklist–Revised (PCL-R; Hare, 1991; 2003), these being primarily for the use in a non-forensic, non-clinical population. The SRP 4 is the most recent version of this scale and demonstrates good internal reliability as well as promising criterion-related, convergent, and discriminant validity in terms of capturing psychopathy in a broad range of individuals, including community, college, and offender samples (Neal & Sellbom, 2012). There has been evidence

that the SRP 4 has moderate to high correlations with other self-report psychopathy measures, including the LSRP and the PPI (Seibert, Miller, Few, Zeichner, & Lynam, 2010; Williams, Paulhus, & Hare, 2007). Unlike the PCL-R, which has a cut-off score, the SRP 4 is expressed as continuous scores, consistent with dimensional approaches that capture the degree to which a person displays prototypic components of psychopathy, instead of categorising one as psychopathic or non-psychopathic.

**Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI).** The earliest version of the NPI (Raskin & Hall, 1979) was developed based on the clinical criteria for Narcissistic Personality Disorder that was anticipated to be incorporated into the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder, Third Edition (DSM-III; American Psychiatric Association, 1980) (Appendix 1.3). The 40-item forced-choice measure was meant to act as a non-clinical instrument to evaluate narcissism features in the general population, thus there is no cut-off score for clinically high narcissism (Foster & Campbell, 2007). Each item in this measure consists of two supposedly antithetic statements (e.g., *I really like to be the centre of attention* vs. *I prefer to blend in with the crowd*), and participants choose one that is most self-descriptive. One point is scored for each narcissistic statement to yield a maximum score of 40.

In the refined version that is most commonly used today, Raskin and Terry (1988) put forward a seven-component solution using principal component analysis, with components of *Authority*, *Self-Sufficiency*, *Superiority*, *Exhibitionism*, *Exploitativeness*, *Vanity*, and *Entitlement*. Several other research teams have attempted to explain the underlying structure of the NPI item pool, but have found mixed results (for a review, see Ackerman et al., 2011). Despite the ongoing debate regarding the identification of a replicable and robust dimensional structure, the current study utilised the seven-factor solution proposed by the NPI authors. The NPI is also regarded as a measure that can capture a general narcissism construct, and has been used in many non-clinical settings (e.g., Kubarych, Deary, & Austin, 2004; Miller & Campbell, 2008).

**Big Five Inventory (BFI).** The BFI (John & Srivastava, 1999) is a 44-item questionnaire that yields continuous scores for the Big Five domains of personality traits, namely extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and

openness (Appendix 2.1).  The extraversion domain is represented by eight items (e.g., *I see myself as someone who generates a lot of enthusiasm*); agreeableness is represented by nine items (e.g., *I see myself as someone who likes to cooperate with others*); conscientiousness is represented by nine items (e.g., *I see myself as someone who makes plans and follows through with them*); neuroticism is represented by eight items (e.g., *I see myself as someone who worries a lot*); and openness is represented by ten items (e.g., *I see myself as someone who has an active imagination*).  Respondents indicate the extent to which they agree that a particular characteristic applies to them using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).  Higher scores in each domain scale indicate higher levels of that particular dimension of personality.

Its briefness as a multidimensional personality inventory was a sensible choice as it enables quick and efficient evaluation of the five personality dimensions. According to several studies, the BFI is said to have well-established validity and reliability, distinguishable facet traits, and has reported strong convergence with other self-report measures and with peer ratings of the Big Five (Benet-Martínez & John, 1998; John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008; Soto, John, Gosling, & Potter, 2008).

**Vulnerability Scale (VS).**  The VS (Chung & Charles, 2016) is a 20-item questionnaire developed specifically for this project (Appendix 2.2).  Much research on vulnerability and victimisation in the bullying or offending literature has concentrated on traits in the Five-Factor Model that are predictive of vulnerability, or used other variables such as age, gender, or victimisation history as proxy measures for vulnerability (e.g., Crick & Bigbee, 1998; Kim & Geistfeld, 2008; Wheeler et al., 2009).  One main aim of the current research project was to determine the traits of individuals who are likely to fall victim to people high in Dark Triad traits. Premised on the literature discussed in Chapter 1, vulnerability to social manipulation for the purposes of developing this scale was operationally defined as *a physical, psychological, or social condition whereby a person fails to detect or avoid potentially harmful interpersonal interactions*.

The VS was an adaptation of the existing Social Vulnerability Scale (Pinsker, Stone, Pachana, & Greenspan, 2006), a scale which encompasses two main dimensions: credulity and gullibility.  It is believed that individuals who are credulous and gullible may be more susceptible to manipulation, exploitation, and

deception (Greenspan et al., 2001). As described by Greenspan (2005), credulity refers to a propensity to unquestioningly believe things that are unlikely to be true, while gullibility is a susceptibility to exploitation. The 15-item version of the Social Vulnerability Scale (after a factor analytic study by Pinsker et al., 2011) included seven items on credulity (e.g., *believe things that other people would view as clearly untrue*) and eight items on gullibility (e.g., *been talked into giving cheques, bank account details, or credit card numbers to a stranger who has later tried to defraud him/her*).

The original Social Vulnerability Scale was targeted at older adults and was designed to be used as an informant-based behaviour rating scale. The items included had an emphasis on financial exploitation. For the current project, the scale was modified to a self-report questionnaire. To ensure the scale was more applicable to the general population, several items of a monetary nature were eliminated (e.g., *How often would/has/is/does he/she been taken in by postal scams, e.g., prize draws or sweepstakes requiring an initial purchase or cash outlay*) while some items were revised and added to reflect general bullying or harassment behaviours (e.g., *If I am subject to insults I tend to accept that the person insulting me has some justification*, *I am frequently subjected to nit-picking and trivial fault-finding*). Respondents were to rate to what extent each statement describes them when faced with such situations on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very untrue of me) to 5 (very true of me). The range of possible scores is 20 to 100, with higher scores reflecting higher levels of vulnerability to manipulation.

**Procedure**

Ethical approval for each study was granted by the Faculty of Health, Life, and Social Sciences Research Ethics and Governance Committee of Edinburgh Napier University. Informed consent was obtained prior to data collection (Appendices 1 & 2). Participants in both samples were told that they were participating in a study on personality and that they would be notified if they met the criteria to take part in either one of the main studies (which will be described in detail in the next three chapters). All questionnaires in this phase were completed online using a web-based questionnaire platform, Polldaddy. Participants with missing data were excluded.

## Preliminary Results

### Dark Triad Scores

Internal consistency was calculated for the MACH-IV, SRP 4 and NPI-40 and their separate subscales. With reference to George and Mallery's (2003) guidance, the recommended minimum Cronbach's alpha is 0.70. Internal consistency for the MACH-IV was acceptable at 0.64, but extremely poor for subscales in which Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.11 to 0.53. Cronbach's alpha for the SRP 4 was 0.88, and for subscales ranged from 0.69 to 0.80. Alpha reliability for the NPI-40 was good ($\alpha = 0.84$), but poor for subscales ($0.31 < \alpha < 0.69$). Exact Cronbach's alpha values are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

*Alpha Reliabilities for MACH-IV, SRP 4, and NPI-40, and their Subscales*

|  | Number of Items | Cronbach's Alpha |
|---|---|---|
| MACH-IV |  |  |
| *Tactics* | 9 | 0.53 |
| *Views* | 9 | 0.46 |
| *Morality* | 2 | 0.11 |
| Overall | 20 | 0.64 |
|  |  |  |
| SRP 4 |  |  |
| *Interpersonal Manipulation* | 16 | 0.80 |
| *Callous Affect* | 16 | 0.70 |
| *Erratic Lifestyle* | 16 | 0.69 |
| *Criminal Tendencies* | 16 | 0.75 |
| Overall | 64 | 0.88 |
|  |  |  |
| NPI-40 |  |  |
| *Authority* | 8 | 0.69 |
| *Self-Sufficiency* | 6 | 0.31 |
| *Superiority* | 5 | 0.57 |
| *Exhibitionism* | 7 | 0.55 |
| *Exploitativeness* | 5 | 0.51 |
| *Vanity* | 3 | 0.61 |
| *Entitlement* | 6 | 0.41 |
| Overall | 40 | 0.84 |

Descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations for the MACH-IV, SRP 4, and NPI-40 total scores and subscales are reported in Table 4. In a principal component analysis, all three measures loaded relatively highly ($> 0.67$) onto a single factor that accounted for 61.91% of the variance (Eigenvalue = 1.86). Therefore, in addition to scoring the Dark Triad measures individually, the scores

were standardised then averaged to yield an overall Dark Triad composite score. This analysis was included as an exploratory step because some researchers have argued for the unification approach because of evidence showing that the three traits can be loaded to a single latent factor (e.g., Jonason, Jones, & Lyons, 2013).

Table 4

*Means and Standard Deviation Scores of MACH-IV, SRP 4, NPI-40, and Dark Triad Composite (z-scores) for Males (N = 50) and Females (N = 109)*

| | Mean (SD) | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Males | Females | Total |
| MACH-IV | 58.36  (7.15) | 55.50  (8.13) | 56.40  (7.92) |
| SRP 4 | 153.98 (22.38) | 141.19 (22.89) | 145.21 (23.43) |
| NPI-40 | 15.22  (7.40) | 12.93  (6.28) | 13.65  (6.72) |
| DT Composite | 0.29  (0.76) | –0.13  (0.76) | 0  (0.78) |

Each Dark Triad score for the current sample was statistically compared with descriptive findings from previous studies using Cohen's $d$ effect size as an indicator of the magnitude of difference, with $d = 0.20$ indicating a small effect, $d = 0.50$ indicating a moderate effect, and $d = 0.80$ indicating a large effect (Cohen, 1988). The MACH-IV mean scores of the current sample were compared with those of Beller and Bosse's (2017) large online sample ($N = 11702$). The sample from the current project had significantly lower MACH-IV scores, with $t(11859) = 9.56$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 0.93$. Compared with SRP 4 norm scores reported by Gordts, Uzieblo, Neumann, Van den Bussche, and Rossi (2017) based on a Belgian community sample ($N = 1504$), mean SRP 4 scores in the current sample were significantly higher, with $t(1661) = 5.30$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 0.45$. The NPI-40 mean scores of the current sample were also compared with those of a study conducted by Foster, Shiverdecker, and Turner (2016), which was based on a sample from an online survey ($N = 10063$). The large online sample consisted of participants from a wide range of demographics. There were no differences in mean NPI-40 scores between the current sample and the online sample in Foster and colleagues' study [$t(10220) = 0.59$, $p = 0.55$, $d = 0.05$].

An independent-samples $t$-test was conducted to examine gender differences. As shown in Table 4, males had significantly higher Dark Triad composite scores ($M = 0.29$, $SD = 0.76$) as compared to females ($M = –0.13$, $SD = 0.76$), $t(157) = 3.20$, $p = 0.002$, $d = 0.55$. Males also scored significantly higher than females on

Machiavellianism [$t(157) = 2.14$, $p = 0.034$, $d = 0.37$], psychopathy [$t(157) = 3.29$, $p = 0.001$, $d = 0.57$], and narcissism [$t(157) = 2.02$, $p = 0.045$, $d = 0.33$].

Table 5

*Intercorrelations among MACH-IV, SRP 4, NPI-40, and Dark Triad Composite Scores (N = 159)*

| | Correlation Matrix | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | MACH-IV | SRP 4 | NPI-40 | DT Composite |
| MACH-IV | - | | | |
| SRP 4 | 0.58** | - | | |
| NPI-40 | 0.27** | 0.42** | - | |
| DT Composite | 0.79** | 0.85** | 0.72** | - |

*Note*. ** $p < 0.01$.

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to test the intercorrelations among the three Dark Triad constructs, as presented in Table 5. Dark Triad composite showed significant strong positive correlations with Machiavellianism [$r(157) = 0.79$, $p < 0.001$], psychopathy [$r(157) = 0.85$, $p < 0.001$], and narcissism [$r(157) = 0.72$, $p < 0.001$]. Machiavellianism was significantly correlated with psychopathy [$r(157) = 0.58$, $p < 0.001$] and narcissism [$r(157) = 0.27$, $p = 0.001$]. Psychopathy was significantly correlated with narcissism [$r(157) = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$].

In the present project, the strength of the intercorrelations among the three constructs (Figure 2) were largely in line with previous findings.
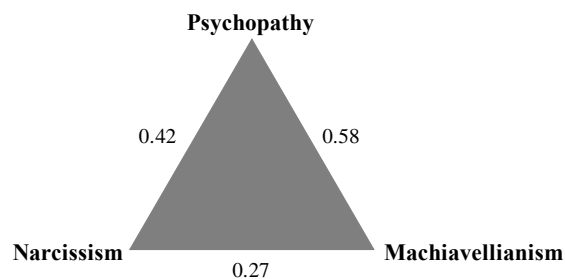


*Figure 2.* Correlations among measures of Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism. Adapted from the brief report introducing the concept by Paulhus & Williams (2002), Journal of Research in Personality, p. 559.

**Vulnerability Scale and Big Five Inventory**

Descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations, and internal consistencies for each subscale of the Big Five Inventory can be seen in Table 6.

Across the present sample ($N = 144$), alpha reliability for the Vulnerability Scale was 0.80, and alpha reliabilities for the five personality domains of the Big Five Inventory ranged between 0.78 and 0.90, indicating good internal consistencies of the items in the scales.

Table 6
*Alpha Reliabilities, Means, and Standard Deviations of the Vulnerability Scale Scores and the Five Personality Domains of the Big Five Inventory (N = 144)*

|  | M | SD | Number of Items | Cronbach's Alpha |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Vulnerability Scale* |  |  |  |  |
| Vulnerability | 47.69 | 11.22 | 20 | 0.80 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *Big Five Inventory* |  |  |  |  |
| Extraversion | 3.07 | 0.92 | 8 | 0.90 |
| Agreeableness | 3.52 | 0.71 | 9 | 0.82 |
| Conscientiousness | 3.38 | 0.67 | 9 | 0.80 |
| Neuroticism | 3.10 | 0.83 | 8 | 0.85 |
| Openness | 3.62 | 0.62 | 10 | 0.78 |

An exploratory factor analysis with principal components extraction was also performed on the 20-item Vulnerability Scale to examine the latent factors of the scale. As some conceptual overlap among the items exists, a promax oblique rotation was used. Inspection of initial eigenvalues and scree plot did not show a clear indication of the number of factors to retain. The most appropriate factor solution was determined by minimising ambiguous loadings (i.e., items with loadings across two or more factors), retaining item loadings above 0.30, and to ensure that there is a minimum of three items loading on each factor (Costello & Osborne, 2005). Accordingly, a three-factor solution was shown to provide the most interpretable data, explaining 38.43% of the total variance. Table 7 shows the rotated factor loadings for all 20 items. However, as the present project aimed to examine a general vulnerability variable and its relationship with basic personality models, the use of the Vulnerability Scale assumes that all items assess a single construct of vulnerability to social manipulation (i.e., all items are summed to obtain a total score).

Detailed analyses of these findings are discussed in their corresponding chapters.

Table 7
*Pattern Matrix for the Three-Factor Solution on the 20 Items of the Vulnerability Scale*

| Vulnerability Scale Items | Factor | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| When I am criticised or given the 'silent treatment', it is normally because I have said or done something stupid. | 0.71 | | |
| If I am subject to insults I tend to accept that the person insulting me has some justification. | 0.62 | | |
| I am frequently subjected to nit-picking and trivial fault-finding. | 0.58 | | |
| Sometimes I will take the blame for something I did not do, to avoid trouble. | 0.55 | | |
| I tend to believe what I am told by others even if they have deceived me before. | 0.48 | | 0.44 |
| In group discussions, my opinions tend to be overruled or ignored. | 0.44 | | |
| I tend to justify or defend or make excuses for others who act in a morally or ethically questionable manner. | 0.39 | | |
| I tend to believe everything I read (e.g. newspapers, magazines, books, advertisements, internet, etc.) | | 0.73 | |
| I can be easily persuaded to purchase unneeded products or services (e.g. things I already own or will not use). | | 0.67 | |
| I have signed up for investments or deals that seem too good to be true (e.g. promising large returns in a short time). | | 0.58 | 0.32 |
| I tend to believe things that other people would view as clearly untrue. | | 0.53 | |
| I am always talked into doing unreasonable favours for others even when there is no chance of being paid back. | | 0.50 | |
| I cannot be tricked into revealing secrets to others. * | | 0.43 | |
| I never lend money to someone who is unlikely to repay it (e.g. a stranger, or someone with a history of borrowing money and not paying it back). * | | 0.36 | |
| If I get blamed by someone for something that is not my fault, I will confront the person. * | | | 0.73 |
| I will retaliate if I am a target of offensive and inappropriate language.* | | | 0.66 |
| When someone takes credit for or steals my ideas and contributions without acknowledging them, I prefer not to expose them. | | | 0.50 |
| If I do not like the way someone is treating me, I make allowances for the way they are behaving. | | | 0.47 |
| I cannot be tricked into taking the blame for something that I did not do. * | | | 0.46 |
| I have been talked into giving cheques, bank account details, or credit card numbers to a stranger who has later tried to defraud me. | | | 0.44 |
| % variance rotated | 21.38 | 9.12 | 7.92 |

*Note.* *Negatively-keyed items were reverse-scored.
Factor loadings lower than 0.30 were suppressed.

**Chapter 4:    The Dark Triad and Judgement Accuracy of Personality Traits, Emotional States, and Vulnerability**

*"Oh, grandmother, what big eyes you have!"*
*"The better to see you with."*

– Little Red Cap, Jacob & Wilhelm Grimm (1812/2014)

**Introduction**

People make crucial decisions based on their rapid judgements of others upon meeting for the first time.  As a social species, interpersonal judgements are ubiquitous and evolutionarily adaptive, as effective person perception is an essential skill for the basic tasks of survival and reproduction (Haselton & Funder, 2006).  Social behaviours are influenced by perceptions – whether accurate or flawed – of the characteristics of individuals with whom people interact.  Cues such as facial features, physical attributes, verbal and non-verbal behaviour enable people to make instantaneous inferences about another's state and trait characteristics, including his or her trustworthiness (Rule, Krendl, Ivcevic, & Ambady, 2013), assertiveness (Schmid Mast, Hall, Murphy, & Colvin, 2003), and sexual interest (Treat, Viken, Farris, & Smith, 2016).

The literature review in Chapter 1 laid a foundation for the supposition that individuals high on the Dark Triad scales, particularly psychopaths, have an advantage in picking up on nonverbal cues that are related to victimisation of others.  This enhanced ability implies that they are a subset of individuals who are relatively more skilled at recognising personality traits and emotional states associated with vulnerability, which can facilitate the choosing of victims for manipulation.

The first study of the current project, presented in this chapter, aimed to investigate this notion in more detail.  To provide context, this chapter begins with a general discussion of the personality judgment accuracy literature and the paradigms used in this field.

**Personality Judgement Accuracy**

Personality judgements are attempts to identify the psychological properties of others that help explain what they have done in the past and to predict what they

will do in the future (Funder, 1991). These judgements often arise from superficial and minimal interaction.

The accuracy of judging traits is almost always assessed by asking perceivers or judges to make scalar ratings of given stimuli, such as photographs or videotaped social interactions. In the 'zero-acquaintance' paradigm, a perceiver is required to make judgments about a target with whom the perceiver has had no prior interaction. People's personality judgements from brief observations, or what Ambady and Rosenthal (1992) referred to as 'thin slices', have been found to be fairly accurate, even when such first impressions are based on limited information (Ambady, Bernieri, & Richeson, 2000).

For example, Carney, Colvin, and Hall (2007) asked student judges to observe short video clips of two participants engaging in conversations. The student judges were exposed to thin slices that varied in time ranging from 5 to 300 seconds, and the thin slices were extracted either from the beginning, middle, or end of the conversation. Carney and colleagues discovered that judgement accuracy was higher when students were rating thin slices taken later in conversations, and increased exposure also improved the judgement accuracy for extraversion and agreeableness. Furthermore, Oltmanns, Friedman, Fiedler, and Turkheimer (2004) found that, even when all cues (e.g., haircut, glasses) were standardised, untrained student judges were able to make reliable first impressions of military recruits who exhibit pathological personality traits based on 30 seconds of information.

Multiple studies have found that judgement accuracy tends to be higher for extraversion (e.g., Beer & Watson, 2008; Borkenau, Mauer, Riemann, Spinath, & Angleitner, 2004), arguably due to extraversion having the greatest number of valid and available behavioural cues (Funder & Sneed, 1993). A study by Borkenau, Brecke, Möttig, and Paelecke (2009) has shown that exposure to a stranger's face even for just 50 milliseconds is enough for one to infer his or her extraversion with considerable accuracy.

In some studies where the correlation between self-ratings and ratings by a stranger was used as an indicator of judgement accuracy, it was also found that people's perception of some traits were fairly inaccurate. For example, the agreement between self- and stranger-ratings for emotional stability has been found to be extremely weak (Borkenau et al., 2009; Vazire & Gosling, 2004). Meta-analyses (Connelly & Ones, 2010; Connolly, Kavanagh, & Viswesvaran, 2007) have

shown that others' ratings of agreeableness typically have lower interrater reliability and lower self-other correlations. Kilianski (2008) found perceivers' judgments of targets' self-esteem to exhibit only moderate accuracy. Replicating previous results, judgement accuracy for extraversion was higher, but not for any of the other Big Five factors. In sum, people are generally most accurate when judging for "visible" traits such as extraversion.

Research has also looked into implicit judgements about other criteria – whether a target is lying or not, thinking a particular thought or not, experiencing a particular emotion or not. For instance, Porter and ten Brinke (2008) examined whether participants in their study were able to identify deceptive facial expression with the naked eye, and found that despite performing above the level of chance, they made errors about 40% of the time; accuracy in judging sad and fearful expressions did not differ from chance.

The findings of these studies were similar to those of Hess and Kleck (1994), who found participants to be relatively poor at discriminating between spontaneous and deliberate emotional facial expressions. Some researchers have proposed that smiles that occur in conjunction with an underlying positive affect (i.e., spontaneous smiles) are different from smiles that are posed (i.e., deliberate smiles), both temporally and topographically (Ekman & Friesen, 1982; Schmidt, Ambadar, Cohn, & Reed, 2006). For example, both types of smiles involve the contraction of the zygomatic major muscles, resulting in the lifting of cheekbones, but only spontaneous smiles will cause the orbicularis oculi muscles to contract, forming crows' feet (Ekman, Davidson, & Friesen, 1990). This suggests that perceivers utilise available cues to make the distinction between deliberate and spontaneous smiles. In Hess and Kleck's study, the small margin of accuracy was argued to be a function of the consistent reliance upon cues that were not valid discriminators of the two types of expressions.

Judging the traits and states of others is consequential for the person who makes these judgements, and is equally consequential for the person who is judged. Personality judgements can have a massive impact on impression formation and decision-making, especially in the political arena where leaders rely heavily on how they present themselves to influence how the public perceive them (Koppensteiner, Stephan, & Jäschke, 2015). There is evidence that perceptions of competence of

congressional candidates in the United States of America, based on a facial photograph, predict electoral success (Todorov, Mandisodza, Goren, & Hall, 2005).

Further, hiring decisions at job interviews are highly reliant on the interviewer's perceptions of the applicant's personality. On the one hand, findings from multiple studies suggested that naïve judgements based solely on perceptions of chief executive officers' facial appearance predict company profits and success (Rule & Ambady, 2008, 2009). On the other hand, there have been examples where narcissists excel in interviews with their ability create positive initial impressions in face-to-face settings (Colvin, Block, & Funder, 1995; Paulhus, 1998). As seen in the literature discussing destructive leaders, narcissistic tendencies relate to short-term success, and may lead to performance deficit in the long run (Campbell, Bush, Brunell, & Shelton, 2005; Robins & Beer, 2001).

Related to this, Vazire et al. (2008) argued that narcissism can be judged with some degree of accuracy based on physical characteristics alone, given that an acute concern about one's appearance is a fundamental aspect of sub-clinical narcissism (Raskin & Terry, 1988; Sedikides, Gregg, Cisek, & Hart, 2007). As expected, narcissism was accurately perceived, and was found to be associated with a neat, organised appearance, expensive and flashy clothing, and a cheerful demeanour. The ability to accurately judge traits, especially those that are malevolent in nature, has important consequences for interpersonal interaction. Narcissists' arrogance may be disguised as confidence during brief interactions, given their ability to impress using their appearance and charm. If indeed people are able to develop fairly accurate impressions of others' levels of narcissism, one may have the opportunity to avoid these potentially unpleasant interactions. Such examples also emphasise the importance of making the right hiring decisions, showing how flawed judgements can be costly to organisations. Therefore, it greatly matters whether personality judgements are accurate.

While there has been much focus on the interpersonal assessment of personality traits in general, not many studies have looked at the role of all three Dark Triad traits simultaneously. There has also been less attention placed on whether people high in Dark Triad constructs are able to accurately assess traits related to vulnerability. This study aims to fill this gap.

The next section discusses the approaches to measuring personality judgement accuracy, as this lays a foundation for how data are being analysed in the current study.

**Criteria and Processes: How Do (In)Accurate Personality Judgements Occur?**

When it comes to assessing the accuracy of personality judgements, three criteria are usually applied (Funder, 2012).  The first and most commonly used criterion is the *self-other agreement*, in which accuracy is evaluated in terms of the extent to which a judge's assessments agree with a given target's judgement of his or her own personality, as assessed using self-report measures.  The next criterion is *other-other agreement*, also known as *consensus*.  This type of evaluation takes into account the degree to which two (or more) judges agree in their judgements of the same target.  The third criterion is *behavioural prediction*.  In other words, if a personality judgement is able to successfully predict a behaviour or a life outcome related to behaviour, it can be argued that the judgement is accurate.

Despite evidence showing that people make fast judgements about others (Freeman, Stolier, Ingbretsen, & Hehman, 2014), judging the personality of others is a non-trivial process; for accurate judgements to occur multiple consecutive stages have to take place.  The accuracy in personality judgement is a joint product of the characteristics and the behaviour of the person being evaluated (also known as the *target*) as well as the observations and perspicacity of the judge (also known as the *perceiver*).

The Realistic Accuracy Model (RAM; Funder, 1995) has been used as a framework to understand the circumstances that make accuracy in personality judgements more or less likely to be achieved.  The RAM describes the process that connects an individual's personality trait with a perceiver's correct judgement of that trait.  According to the RAM, for accurate judgement to occur, four stages have to happen.  The individual being judged must first express a behaviour relevant to the trait.  Second, the trait-relevant behaviour must be available and observable to the perceiver in a given context.  Third, the trait-relevant, available behaviour, must then be detected by the perceiver.  Finally, the trait-relevant, available, and detected information must be utilised properly to render the perceiver's judgement accurate.  In other words, accuracy relies on the relevance, availability, detection, and

utilisation of behavioural cues; any circumstance that undermines any of these four elements will make accuracy less likely to be achieved.

Funder (2012) asserted that the RAM does not describe what always happens in personality judgements. Instead, this framework describes what *must* happen to achieve accurate personality judgement. Krueger and Funder (2004) highlighted an imbalance in social psychology, arguing that the literature often devotes far more attention to how human judgement is often wrong than to how accurate people's judgements are. The RAM acknowledges, and in fact illustrates how challenging it is to achieve accurate personality judgements, for only if all four stages are traversed successfully can accurate judgments occur. It should, therefore, not be surprising that inaccurate judgements can and *do* often happen. Essentially, Funder contended that it is easy for researchers to prove that lay judgements of personality are imperfect, but it is also trivial. In this light, it can be concluded according to the RAM that there is a higher possibility of achieving accuracy when a "good target" or a "good trait" is being judged, and when the judgment is made on the basis of "good information", as well as when a "good judge" is making the judgment.

## Good Judges of Personality: The Role of the Dark Triad

There has been little consensus in the early literature as to what makes a person good at interpersonal judgements (Letzring, 2008). This is partly because of concerns regarding methodological challenges raised by Cronbach (1955), criticising the use of a global discrepancy score in early research as a measure of accuracy. It is perhaps also due to evolutionary perspectives that imply that humans *ought to* have developed accurate personality judgement as it is necessary for social survival (Haselton & Funder, 2006).

According to Ambady et al. (1995), there are specific individual differences variables that predict who will be more or less accurate in these judgements. Allport (1937) suggested that the ability to judge others is akin to artistic ability; it would be therefore unreasonable to expect people to be uniformly accurate when it comes to estimating every quality of every person.

There have been arguments that non-hostile, non-power-oriented, and non-manipulative characteristics are associated with more accurate personality judgement (Vogt & Colvin, 2003), whilst other have found that good judges of others are lower in social skills and more attuned to decoding non-verbal behaviour (Ambady et al.,

1995; Rosenthal & DePaulo, 1979). A crucial caveat to the findings about what makes a good judge, following up from what has been discussed above, is that no single characteristic or a set of characteristics has emerged from the literature that is consistently associated with judgement accuracy (Davis & Kraus, 1997). Where contradictory results have been obtained between one study and another, Taft (1955) suggested that the variation may merely be due to the low reliability of measures used, as well as specific factors involved in the studies such as the traits being judged and the targets being used. The use of different accuracy criteria by different researchers may have also contributed to the reason why replicable findings are elusive (Letzring, 2008).

Given their adeptness at negotiation, intimidation, and exploitation, those with high levels of Dark Triad personalities can be potentially thought to have an enhanced ability when it comes to evaluating other people's personality and emotional traits, which can facilitate the choosing of victims for manipulation. An early study by Adams (1927) tested the ability of girls in ranking themselves and their acquaintances on 63 personality traits, using the pooled rating as a criterion for accuracy. It was suggested that good judges of others' personalities exhibit more negative, antisocial, and indifferent qualities. Adams went to the extent of arguing that those who are better at determining personality traits of others tend to be cold-blooded and regard others as tools instead of human beings. This agentic tendency allows them to develop an astute ability to measure others. In the early review by Taft (1955), it was reported that the ability to judge others and social detachment are positively related. Those who were less socially-oriented were otherwise more task-oriented, enabling them to make more objective but accurate judgements of others.

The robust negative relationships between each dark personality and empathy (e.g., Barlow, Qualter, & Stylianou, 2010; Del Gaizo & Falkenbach, 2008; Watson & Morris, 1991) suggest that people high in the Dark Triad remain unmoved by emotional involvement with others due to a common underlying deficit in empathy. On the basis of the findings discussed in the previous paragraph, there can be two interpretations for this observation. First, the lack of empathy in Dark Triad individuals may be associated with an inability to recognise emotions in others, which then allows them to carry out their manipulation strategies in simply a cold-blooded manner.

However, it has been argued by Wai and Tiliopoulos (2012) that there is a difference between affective empathy and cognitive empathy. Although the literature has yet to agree on a precise definition on these two constructs, a general consensus is that affective empathy is the generation of an appropriate emotional reaction in response to others' emotion, whereas cognitive empathy denotes the capacity to take mental perspective of another, allowing one to discern others' emotional states (Shamay-Tsoory, 2011). Cognitive empathy is said to provide individuals with sensitive emotional information, which may be a possible factor underlying manipulative personalities (McIlwain, 2003). This argument leads to the second interpretation: findings from Wai and Tiliopoulos's study suggest that people high in Dark Triad traits seem to exhibit an empathic profile (i.e., high on cognitive empathy but low on affective empathy) that actually allows them to retain the ability to read targets and then make use of that knowledge to devise ways to manipulate and exploit the weak, without feeling guilt.

**Cues Used for Personality Judgements**

It is evident that attributes or traits that are important for decision-making are inferred from a range of verbal and nonverbal cues. Evolutionarily speaking, such cues convey information about personality and emotional states that are used to guide subsequent behaviour (Kramer, Gottwald, Dixon, & Ward, 2012). There has been some earlier research within criminology to show that people with violent tendencies target specific people for manipulation, for instance, people who are socially isolated and emotionally vulnerable (von Hentig, 1984). As previously indicated in Chapter 1, the assertion that some body language is indicative of an individual's level of vulnerability has been found to be compelling. For example, psychopaths have been found to be skilled at identifying social and emotional vulnerability through gait styles (Grayson & Stein, 1981).

Given that Dark Triad individuals frequently engage in exploitative behaviours such as deception, hostility, and callousness, it seems reasonable to argue that they may have the ability to accurately perceive verbal or non-verbal cues signalling vulnerability, and then act on this perception. According to Black (2013), the major types of cues used by Dark Triad individuals to identify traits and emotions include body language, facial expression, and linguistic cues.

**Body Language.** The gestures and body movements that people make reflect and help shape mental processes. The meanings derived from body behaviours are complex, with some used for communication purposes, others for self-expression of emotions, and some as a reflection of attitudes and personality traits (Argyle, 1988). Non-verbal behaviour is said to be a powerful tool to impact perceptions and inform judgements about other people's personality, life satisfaction (Yeagley, Morling, & Nelson, 2007), and sexual orientation (Ambady, Hallahan, & Conner, 1999).

Body language can also disclose a person's level of vulnerability, and hence influences perceptions of dominance or submissiveness (Richards et al., 1991), powerfulness (Montepare & Zebrowitz-McArthur, 1988), and even victimisation history (Wheeler et al., 2009). Earlier studies revealed that some offenders carefully select their victims of sexual assault; their victims tend to display a lack of confidence, high emotional passivity, and are more likely to respond submissively to the threat of rape (Amir, 1971; Macdonald, 1975; Miller et al., 1978).

In a study by Book et al. (2013), inmates from a maximum security institution reported fitness (i.e., ability to retaliate during an attack), physical shape (i.e., heavy set body type relates to speed of movement), and gender to be the most common criteria for selecting victims. Specifically, those scoring higher on Factor 1 of the Psychopathy Checklist–Revised (i.e., items related to affective and interpersonal behaviour) were more likely to attend to cues such as walking style when judging a target's vulnerability.

**Facial Expression.** People extract meaning from faces to understand another person's mental state and intentions, in order to adjust their actions accordingly for effective social interaction (Abdel Rahman, 2011). Early detection of emotional facial expression is adaptive, as early detection of a threatening face may reduce the likelihood of confrontation (Amado, Yildirim, & İyilikçi, 2011). A study by Willis and Todorov (2006) demonstrated that an exposure time as minimal as a tenth of a second is sufficient for one to draw conclusions from facial appearances about the state and trait characteristics of another.

It is not clear, however, if it is possible for one to draw *accurate* judgements based on other people's faces. While it is assumed that humans are innately effective at communicating emotions using faces, the Dangerous Decisions Theory

by Porter and ten Brinke (2009) states that people's interpretations of such facial expressions that are influenced by initial, intuitive evaluations can be flawed. Flawed evaluations can produce strong bias in the interpretation of subsequent information about a person. Therefore, facial appearance judgements, whether or not accurate, can influence attitudes of people high in Dark Triad traits and their future behaviour towards their targets of manipulation.

The ability to accurately recognise facial expressions, however, would be useful for individuals high in Dark Triad traits in choosing potential victims. The idea that affect and empathy are typically attenuated in psychopaths has been debated since Cleckley (1941) introduced the idea of emotional poverty. Glass and Newman (2006) found male offenders high in psychopathy to perform well at identifying facial affect, especially fearful expressions. Similarly, according to a study by Fecteau, Pascual-Leone, and Théoret (2008), preliminary evidence suggests that people with psychopathic traits may have a talent for emotional expression recognition, rather than a deficit as core theories of psychopathy have previously suggested (e.g., Cleckley, 1941; Lykken, 1995).

Contradictory findings were reported in a meta-analysis by Marsh and Blair (2008), where people with disorders marked by antisocial behaviour across 20 studies showed specific fear recognition deficits. Likewise, research findings have not shown Machiavellians to have an advantage in recognising non-verbal messages with regard to emotions (McIlwain, 2003; Simon, Francis, & Lombardo, 1990). As for people with narcissistic personality disorder, specific deficits in this group were reported in recognising faces representing fear and disgust, which is interestingly similar to findings of several studies that examined people high in psychopathy (e.g., Blair et al., 2004; Dolan & Fullam, 2006; Kosson, Suchy, Mayer, & Libby, 2002). When looking at the three traits of the Dark Triad in tandem, it has been suggested that there is an indication of hampered facial affect recognition (e.g., Jonason & Krause, 2013; Wai & Tiliopoulos, 2012).

That said, as the face plays a central role in interpersonal communication (Landau, 1989), it is likely that people with social predatory tendencies take cues of others' state and trait characteristics from the human face (Black, Porter, Baker, & Korva, 2012). Furthermore, on the surface, it appears reasonable to assume that Dark Triad individuals are more accurate in decoding other people's facial affect, given that some people use tears or alter their own facial expressions as a strategy for

influencing others (Falbo, 1977). Taken together, it can be therefore argued that the relationship between the ability to read emotions and Dark Triad traits exists, but may be complex.

**Linguistic Cues.** With respect to speech and personality, given that a large proportion of human expression is verbal in nature, there has been evidence that one's verbal behaviour and character are related, as seen even from earlier studies (Sanford, 1942a). Many researchers at that time were of the opinion that failure and inconsistencies in replication of findings were due to the lack of appropriate analytical methodologies. Advances in technology have made it possible to examine language in more depth using sophisticated linguistic analysis programmes. Oberlander and Gill (2006) stated that the types of words used in written communication offer covert clues to people's state and trait characteristics.

Psychopathological research has made use of linguistic analysis as a means to identify and examine abnormal psychological processes (Junghaenel, Smyth, & Santner, 2008). For instance, Oxman, Rosenberg, Schnurr, and Tucker (1988) used a computerised 'General Inquirer' programme to analyse verbal language samples in patients diagnosed with somatisation disorder, major depression, paranoia, and cancer. At the same time, the speech samples were handed to two psychiatrists who were blind to the patients' diagnoses. In this head-to-head test, Oxman and colleagues wanted to see if the patients could be accurately classified back into their appropriate diagnostic groups. Based on the computerised analysis of lexical choice (i.e., words used by patients to express their thoughts), even in the absence of sufficient diagnostic clues, patients could be classified into their respective diagnostic groups and that this classification was more accurate than that of the clinicians (assuming that the initial diagnoses was accurate).

Voices also carry large amounts of socially relevant information to an individual's affective state and personality traits (Scherer, 1972). Zuckerman and Driver (1989), utilising people reading passages of texts, found that a consistent and intuitive perception of personality from voice exists. In Berry's (1990) study, babyish sounding voices were associated with weakness, submissiveness, and vulnerability. Likewise, McAleer, Todorov, and Belin (2014) have shown the tone of voice from a simple '*hello*' directly and immediately informs the judgements of people, including personality traits such as trustworthiness and dominance. It can

therefore be argued that verbal cues, including word choice, speech style, and the overall tone, are indicative of one's degree of vulnerability, which can be used by high-scorers of Dark Triad measures as information for manipulation.

**The Dark Triad and Interpersonal Perception**

Having said that the Dark Triad traits may be associated with enhanced personality judgement accuracy, it can alternatively be argued that the Dark Triad personalities have a general tendency to judge others in an unfavourable way.

The conceptualisation of Machiavellianism involves a universal pessimistic view of others, in which Machiavellians regard humans as fallible and gullible (Christie & Geis, 1970). According to a review by McIlwain (2003), even with the lack of subtle cue-detection skills regarding others' emotional states, their cynical worldview enables them to use their manipulative strategies without hesitation. Narcissists typically hold others in contempt by devaluing and denigrating others for their own gain (Sedikides, Campbell, Reeder, Elliot, & Gregg, 2002). Psychopaths appear to view others instrumentally (Porter & Woodworth, 2007) and engage in selfish and non-cooperative behaviour (Mokros et al., 2008), indicating a low regard for others.

Negative–other bias is typical of people with low agreeableness, which is central to Dark Triad behaviours (e.g., Jakobwitz & Egan, 2006; Miller et al., 2010; Paulhus & Williams, 2002), and such findings are intuitive considering the Dark Triad individuals' callous treatment of others (Jonason et al., 2009; Jones & Paulhus, 2011b).

In a study by Rauthmann (2012) each Dark Triad component preceded different social consequences in interpersonal situations. Narcissists, for instance, were found to perceive others only as less conscientious. Psychopaths did not display significant positive or negative views towards others. Machiavellians showed a more divergent profile from the other two constructs, in which they saw others as low on nurturance, gregariousness, openness, intelligence, and interpersonal skills. In sum, each Dark Triad character type perceive others in unique ways.

Incidentally, as discussed in the previous chapters, the overarching Dark Triad construct has gained immense interest with numerous studies cumulatively evaluating these constructs as a single index. However, Paulhus and Williams

(2002) initially intended to examine the three traits in tandem in order to distinguish them.  The proposition here is, if the traits demonstrate unique correlates, that evidence should be sufficient to point towards a *discrimination* framework.

## Current Study and Hypothesis

The aims of the present study were twofold.  The first aim was to investigate whether there would be a significant relationship between scores on measures of the Dark Triad and the accuracy of judging personality, emotional traits, and vulnerability in others.  Alternatively, higher Dark Triad scores could be associated with a general tendency to view others as possessing traits predictive of vulnerability.  The cues that perceivers use to make judgements about the targets' personality impressions and degree of vulnerability were also considered.

The second aim was to examine whether the relationships between Dark Triad traits and judgement accuracy vary across the three traits of Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism.  Given the theoretical concerns regarding combining each of the Dark Triad traits to a single index, the current study aims to highlight the similarities and differences, if any, among the three traits.  Supposing there are differences in the underlying processes and mechanisms among the Dark Triad traits, it is expected that each will bring about different social outcomes, particularly when assessing the traits of others.

## Method

### Participants

**Targets.**  Eight targets (i.e., participants featured in the video clips) were purposely selected from a larger sample who, as described in Chapter 3, completed the Vulnerability Scale and Big Five Inventory ($N = 144$) in the Initial Phase. Targets' (2 males, 6 females) ages ranged from 23 to 29 years.  Each participant received a £10 high street voucher as compensation for their time and effort.

**Perceivers**.  Seventy-eight perceivers (i.e., participants who viewed video clips), 20 males and 58 females aged 18 to 64 ($M = 29.12$, $SD = 10.89$), participated in this study.  Participants were a subgroup of participants selected from a large sample who, as described in Chapter 3, completed the Dark Triad measures ($N = 159$) in the Initial Phase.

**Materials**

 **Stimulus Videos of Dyadic Interaction.** Four videos, each featuring two targets interacting with each other were developed to be used as the stimuli for this study (Figure 3). In three of the four videos, there was one target from the low vulnerability group (i.e., participants with Vulnerability Scale scores below the median [$N = 71$, $M = 38.49$, $SD = 6.68$]), and one target from the high vulnerability group (i.e., participants with Vulnerability Scale scores above the median [$N = 73$, $M = 56.63$, $SD = 6.50$]). The sampling was based on an extreme group analysis, thus it was ensured that participants from each vulnerability group was at least one standard deviation away from the mean ($Mdn = 49.00$, $M = 47.69$, $SD = 11.22$, range $21 - 81$). The fourth video acted as a control group, in which both targets obtained similar scores on the Vulnerability Scale, with both their scores close to the mean. To avoid gender bias, both targets in each video were of the same gender.

 Targets were asked to complete two interaction tasks while being video-recorded, namely The Map Task and The Dress Task. These tasks were specifically chosen as they are considered neutral and do not involve having to convey emotional content (i.e., non-emotive) that may influence their verbal and non-verbal behaviour. First, the targets were assigned separate roles of *Speaker* and *Addressee*. Both targets were seated back-to-back, facing away from each other while completing both tasks. These tasks were intended to be explicitly dialogic and this seating arrangement aimed to stimulate verbal communication, without restricting any conversational gestures. Conversational gestures that accompany and illustrate speech have been found to serve important communicative functions, even when a speaker is aware that the person he or she is speaking to is unable to see them (Clark, 1996). As this video-recording was intended to assess people's accuracy in identifying personality traits and detecting vulnerability, these verbal and non-verbal cues were essential to this video stimulus. Besides, previous studies on the Dark Triad and vulnerability assessment have tended to focus on one particular type of modality when presenting stimuli to perceivers (e.g., photographs, gait). The way in which the stimuli were created in the current study took ecological validity into consideration, because interactions in real-life settings mainly involve a combination of verbal and non-verbal cues.

 The video recording took place in a $5.5 \times 3.5$ metres ($19.25$ metres²) laboratory. The recording equipment consisted of two Sony DCR-SR290E digital

video camera recorders, which were located approximately 1.5 metres each from the Speaker and the Addressee, and not hidden from view.  Prior to being video-recorded, participants were informed that clips and images of the recording would be shown to other participants of the study.  Participants provided written consent for the researcher to use these clips as stimuli for the current study and for illustration purposes (Appendix 3).



*Figure 3.* Both targets sitting back-to-back in The Dress Task.  The left of the screen is a face-on view of the Speaker and the right of the screen is the Addressee.

The Map Task (Appendix 3.1) was modified from the task used in a study by Lindemann (2002).  One participant (the Speaker) had a map with a route, while the other participant's (the Addressee) map did not have a route.  The aim of this collaborative task was for the Speaker to tell the Addressee about the route drawn on the Speaker's map, so that the Addressee could reproduce the route on his or her map as accurately as possible.  The pair of maps was similar, but with several intentional differences: some of the objects on one map did not appear on the other map.  Both the Speaker and the Addressee could speak freely and ask questions, but because they were seated back-to-back, they could not look at each other's map or use gestures to represent features in the maps to each other.  They had to communicate with each other successfully in order to complete the task.  The Speaker and Addressee then swapped roles and repeated the task with a different pair of maps.

The Dress Task (Appendix 3.2) is an adaptation from the one used in a study by Bavelas, Gerwing, Sutton, and Prevost (2008).  The Speaker described a picture of a complex 18th century dress to the Addressee who could not see the picture.  The

Addressee would later pick the described dress out of seven similar pictures. Like the previously-mentioned task, both the Speaker and the Addressee could speak freely and ask questions. The Speaker and Addressee then swapped roles and repeated the task with a different set of pictures.

The video-recordings of the interaction tasks were then edited to two-minute clips. The use of a short-video clip in this study is in line with the 'thin slice' paradigm, in which participants are asked to observe a small selection of an interaction, usually less than five minutes long (Ambady et al., 2000; Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992). As both targets took on the role of both Speaker and Addressee and completed two separate tasks, there were four distinct sections in each of the original recordings. For this reason, for each Speaker–Addressee pair, a total of four 30-second sections of each of the original recordings had to be strategically (as opposed to randomly) extracted (one from each section) to be included in each final clip. The extraction was done by a colleague who had no knowledge of the research aims. To prevent bias, the said colleague was not given specific criteria for extraction.

To ensure that these video stimuli displayed a variety of channels (Slepian, Bogart, & Ambady, 2014), targets were recorded with their faces and bodies in motion (i.e., sitting down while conversing) to produce four sets of audio-video clips. The rationale of including both audio and video modalities was to create a more natural dynamic viewing condition, as these are channels by which human expression can take place. All videotaped participants were fully debriefed after the recording sessions (Appendix 3.3)

**Ratings of Traits and Vulnerability.** The Personality and Emotional Traits Evaluation Questionnaire (Appendix 4.1) was designed based on a rating scale by Demetrioff (2013) to measure the perceivers' accuracy in identifying personality and emotional traits that are predictive of vulnerability. It comprises ratings for five personality and emotional traits, namely self-esteem, assertiveness, anxiety, depression, and empathy. Perceivers rated targets' traits on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (low levels of a trait) to 5 (high levels of a trait). Targets also provided a self-report rating of these traits before recording to enable comparisons to be made. After reverse scoring the necessary items, the sum of all five items yielded a total vulnerability rating score. Perceivers were also asked to describe the cues

used to determine the targets' personality and emotional traits on an open-ended question.

The Vulnerability Assessment Questionnaire (Appendix 4.2) comprised a forced-choice item, asking perceivers to select which of the two targets they thought would be more vulnerable to being taken advantage of. The questionnaire also included two 5-point Likert-type statements, in which participants rated the ease of taking advantage of each target, ranging from 1 (very easy) to 5 (very difficult). Perceivers were also asked to describe the cues used to determine the targets' vulnerability on an open-ended question.

**Procedure**

All 159 participants who completed the Dark Triad measures in the Initial Phase were invited via e-mail to take part in the current study, but only 78 (49.01%) responded. An independent-samples $t$-test was conducted to compare the scores on the Dark Triad measures between the participants who took part in the current study and those who dropped out. There were no statistically significant differences in Dark Triad mean scores between the two groups (all $p$s > 0.05).

The sessions were conducted in a laboratory in Edinburgh Napier University. After informed consent was obtained (Appendix 4), each perceiver was presented with the four video clips on a computer. The order of the videos was counterbalanced using a Latin Square design to control for order effects. After watching each of the four videos, participants completed the Personality and Emotional Traits Evaluation Questionnaire and Vulnerability Assessment Questionnaire. Each session took approximately an hour. Participants were fully debriefed upon completion (Appendix 4.3).

**Analytic Strategy**

Accuracy was measured using self-other agreement as a criterion measure. It is acknowledged that contemporary research utilises self- and informant-ratings as a criterion measure for accuracy as it is regarded as the gold standard in personality research (Back & Vazire, 2012; Funder, 1995). Having said that, according to Hall, Schmid Mast, and West (2016), accuracy can only be examined through its operationally defined criteria, of which self-other agreement is one. It is, however,

important to keep in mind that this is only one possible operational definition of judgement accuracy, as discussed previously.

## Results

### Perceiver Ratings

**Inter-Perceiver Consensus.** Consensus, or the degree to which independent perceivers show agreement in their personality and emotional trait ratings, was computed using intraclass correlations (ICC; Shrout & Fleiss, 1979) with a two-way random effects model. Analyses were performed to find out the mean perceivers' ratings, ICC(2,$k$), as well as the individual perceiver, ICC(2,1). Table 8 shows the consensus among perceiver ratings on each personality and emotional trait. The data suggested a good level of consensus ($\alpha > 0.80$), whereby perceivers significantly agreed in their judgements of all eight targets' self-esteem, assertiveness, anxiety, depression, and empathy.

Table 8
*Perceivers' (N = 78) Consensus and Judgement Accuracy for Personality and Emotional Traits Predictive of Vulnerability*

| Personality and Emotional Traits | Consensus | | Accuracy | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ICC (2,1) | ICC (2,78) | Overall Perceiver | Single Perceiver |
| Self-esteem | 0.35* | 0.98* | –0.29 | –0.19** |
| Assertiveness | 0.29* | 0.97* | 0.81* | 0.48** |
| Anxiety | 0.15* | 0.93* | 0.13 | 0.07 |
| Depression | 0.27* | 0.97* | 0.02 | 0.01 |
| Empathy | 0.06* | 0.84* | –0.08 | –0.05 |

*Note.* *$p < 0.05$. **$p < 0.01$.

**Perceiver Accuracy.** In line with previous studies (e.g., Naumann, Vazire, Rentfrow, & Gosling, 2009; Qiu, Lin, Ramsay, & Yang, 2012), perceiver accuracy was tested using two indices, namely overall perceiver accuracy and single perceiver accuracy.

Overall perceiver accuracy was determined by the correlation between aggregated perceiver ratings and the self-report ratings of the traits and vulnerability across all targets, reflecting the accuracy of the perceivers as a whole, independent of the idiosyncrasies of any single perceiver (Block, 1961). This commonly used index increases the reliability of judgements through the use of multiple judges (Kenny, 1994), but may overestimate human's capacity for accuracy due to aggregating

across individuals' judgements (Hall & Bernieri, 2001). Table 8 also shows the judgement accuracy of all perceivers on each trait. All perceivers were generally able to judge assertiveness with a high level of accuracy, $r = 0.81$, $p = 0.015$.

Single perceiver accuracy was calculated by correlating each perceiver's traits and vulnerability rating of the targets with the targets' self-report ratings, reflecting the mean accuracy levels of a single observer, or in other words, how accurate a "typical" perceiver was. These single perceiver accuracy correlations were then transformed using Fisher's $r$-to-$z$ formula before computing a mean single perceiver accuracy correlation for each trait. The mean single perceiver accuracy correlations were tested against one-sample $t$-test for significance testing (comparisons were against zero, degrees of freedom equalled the number of perceivers minus 1). Referring again to Table 8, a single perceiver can accurately judge assertiveness ($r = 0.48$, $p < 0.001$), but not self-esteem ($r = –0.19$, $p < 0.001$).

With regard to judgement accuracy for target vulnerability (i.e., total ratings of all five traits predictive of vulnerability), no significant correlations were found (all $p$s > 0.05). It should be noted that the Pearson correlation coefficients closely approximated Spearman's rank-order correlations in all analyses. Consequently, only Pearson correlations were reported.

**Dark Triad and Judgement Accuracy**

Correlation analyses were conducted between each Dark Triad trait score and overall trait judgement accuracy. There were no significant relationships (all $r$s < 0.30, all $p$s > 0.05), indicating that higher Dark Triad scores were not associated with better trait judgement accuracy.

Multivariate linear regressions were run to predict trait and vulnerability judgement accuracy from perceivers' Dark Triad traits. The regression analyses showed that the prediction model that included all Dark Triad trait scores explained 6.4% of the variance in trait judgement accuracy for self-esteem, $F(3,74) = 2.75$, $p = 0.049$, $adj.\ R^2 = 0.064$. Higher scores of Machiavellianism appeared to be a predictor of increased judgement accuracy for targets' self-esteem ($\beta = 0.10$, $p = 0.023$). Higher scores of psychopathy was a significant predictor of decreased judgement accuracy for targets' self-esteem ($\beta = –0.14$, $p = 0.012$). Narcissism scores did not significantly predict judgement accuracy for targets' self-esteem ($\beta = 0.12$, $p = 0.92$). The model including all Dark Triad trait scores did not predict

judgement accuracy for assertiveness, $F(3,74) = 0.52$, $p = 0.67$, $adj.$ $R^2 = -0.02$; anxiety, $F(3,74) = 0.96$, $p = 0.42$, $adj.$ $R^2 = -0.002$; depression, $F(3,74) = 1.77$, $p = 0.16$, $adj.$ $R^2 = 0.03$; and empathy, $F(3,74) = 0.95$, $p = 0.42$, $adj.$ $R^2 = -0.002$.

Further correlation analyses were then conducted to assess whether higher Dark Triad scores were associated with higher judgement accuracy for the potential "victim". To analyse this, single perceiver accuracy scores were first pooled across targets from the high vulnerability group in the first three videos. There were no significant relationships between perceivers' Dark Triad scores and accuracy in judging traits of the more vulnerable targets (all $r$s $< 0.30$, all $p$s $> 0.05$).

Single perceiver accuracy scores were then pooled across targets from the low vulnerability group in the first three videos. Perceivers' narcissism scores appeared to be associated with decreased judgement accuracy ($r = -0.21$, $p = 0.062$), but only up to a significance level of 0.10. No other significant results were found (all $r$s $< 0.30$, all $p$s $> 0.05$).

Finally, hierarchical multiple regressions were run to determine if the addition of the Dark Triad measures improved the prediction of trait judgement accuracy over and above demographic variables alone. Age and gender were entered in Step 1 and the Dark Triad traits were entered in Step 2. The results of incremental validity are presented in Table 9. The full model of age, gender, and Dark Triad scores to predict judgement accuracy for targets' self-esteem scores was statistically significant, $R^2 = 0.14$, $F(5, 72) = 2.30$, $p = 0.05$, $adj.$ $R^2 = 0.08$. Machiavellianism was related to increased judgement accuracy for self-esteem, $\beta = 0.34$, $p = 0.017$; whereas psychopathy was related to decreased judgement accuracy for self-esteem, $\beta = -0.29$, $p = 0.09$. The full model to predict judgement accuracy for targets' depression scores also produced marginally significant results, $R^2 = 0.12$, $F(5, 72) = 2.03$, $p = 0.09$, $adj.$ $R^2 = 0.06$. Machiavellianism was related to decreased judgement accuracy for depression, $\beta = -0.27$, $p = 0.05$. Other results were non-significant.

**Dark Triad and Judgement Tendencies**

To assess the Dark Triad persons' perception of targets in general, the Dark Triad composite score and the three individual measures were correlated with the mean scores given for each personality and emotional trait assessed. There were no significant relationships between perceivers' Dark Triad scores and mean trait scores given to all eight targets (all $r$s $< 0.30$, all $p$s $> 0.05$).

Table 9

*Incremental Validity of Dark Triad Over Age and Gender in Predicting Trait Judgement Accuracy*

| | Judgement Accuracy | | | | | | | | | |
| | Self-esteem | | Assertiveness | | Anxiety | | Depression | | Empathy | |
| Variable | β | $R^2$ | β | $R^2$ | β | $R^2$ | β | $R^2$ | β | $R^2$ |
| *Step 1* | | 0.06 | | 0.06 | | 0.03 | | 0.07* | | 0.08* |
| Age | 0.13 | | –0.24** | | 0.06 | | –0.23** | | –0.28** | |
| Gender | 0.22* | | 0.01 | | –0.15 | | –0.16 | | 0.03 | |
| *Step 2* | | 0.14* | | 0.08 | | 0.08 | | 0.12* | | 0.09 |
| Age | 0.10 | | –0.26** | | 0.05 | | –0.24* | | –0.24* | |
| Gender | 0.20* | | –0.03 | | –0.19 | | –0.17 | | 0.07 | |
| MACH-IV | 0.34** | | 0.06 | | –0.22 | | –0.27** | | –0.05 | |
| SRP 4 | –0.29* | | –0.13 | | 0.10 | | 0.17 | | 0.16 | |
| NPI-40 | –0.02 | | –0.07 | | –0.13 | | 0.05 | | 0.00 | |

*Note.* *$p < 0.10$. **$p < 0.05$.

To assess the Dark Triad persons' perception of the potential "victim", the Dark Triad composite score and the three individual Dark Triad scores were correlated with the mean trait scores given to the more vulnerable targets (i.e., pooled across targets from the high vulnerability group in the first three videos). Results revealed that perceivers' Machiavellianism scores were positively correlated with empathy scores given to the more vulnerable targets ($r = 0.28$, $p = 0.014$). Psychopathy scores were negatively correlated with self-esteem scores given to the more vulnerable targets ($r = -0.25$, $p = 0.026$). Dark Triad composite scores were also negatively correlated with self-esteem scores given to the more vulnerable targets ($r = -0.24$, $p = 0.033$). The higher the perceivers' psychopathy scores, the more they perceived the more vulnerable targets as being easy to manipulate ($r = 0.23$, $p = 0.047$). Perceivers' narcissism scores did not correlate with any of the trait ratings given to the more vulnerable targets ($r$s $< 0.30$, $p$s $> 0.05$).

Correlations were also conducted between the Dark Triad scores and the mean trait scores given to targets who were less vulnerable (i.e., pooled across targets from the low vulnerability group in the first three videos). No significant relationships were found (all $r$s $< 0.30$, all $p$s $> 0.05$).

**Dark Triad and "Victim" Selection**

Perceivers were asked to choose which of the two targets in the video they thought were more vulnerable. "Victim" selection accuracy scores were first calculated by determining the percentage of the "vulnerable target" judged correctly across the first three videos. Due to tied scores, Spearman rank-order correlation analyses were run between perceivers' Dark Triad scores and the selection accuracy scores. Only Machiavellianism scores were positively correlated with selection accuracy ($r_s = 0.22$, $p = 0.049$). Psychopathy, narcissism, and Dark Triad composite scores were not associated with selection accuracy, with $r_s = 0.02$, $p = 0.90$, $r_s = -0.10$, $p = 0.38$, and $r_s = 0.03$, $p = 0.78$ respectively.

**Dark Triad and Cues Used**

For the analyses of cues, an initial coding system was first created after examining the responses on the open-ended question for the first time. The coding system was then refined by splitting and combining potential codes after several stages of detailed analyses. A total of six possible categories of cues were generated

to account for all the perceivers' written descriptions, these include: body language (e.g., posture, movements, gestures), facial expressions (e.g., depressed, any specific emotions or the lack of), verbal cues (e.g., the contents of the speech, the way in which the target spoke including volume, speed, pitch, and interjections), static physical appearance (e.g., clothing, hairstyle, physical features), gaze (e.g., eye contact, where the target was looking), and impressionistic cues (e.g., how the target seemed, or the perceivers' general feelings or thoughts).

Two independent appraisers were appointed to examine these written descriptions and use the coding system to determine the cues used by each perceiver. Across all four videos, perceivers reported between 8 and 29 cues for assessing personality and emotional traits ($M = 15.18$, $SD = 5.29$). For the assessment of vulnerability, perceivers reported using between 4 and 16 cues ($M = 6.24$, $SD = 2.49$) across all four videos. Table 10 shows the reported number of cues used by perceivers to assess the traits (range 1 to 5 cues) and vulnerability (range 1 to 4 cues) of targets for each of the four videos.

Table 10
*Means and Standard Deviation Scores of the Number of Cues Used by Perceivers to Assess Personality and Emotional Traits and Vulnerability in Targets across Four Videos*

| Cues Used | | Mean (SD) | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Personality and Emotional Traits | Vulnerability |
| Video 1 | More Vulnerable Target | 1.84 (0.86) | 1.62 (0.86) |
| | Less Vulnerable Target | 1.90 (0.94) | |
| Video 2 | More Vulnerable Target | 1.75 (0.91) | 1.36 (0.69) |
| | Less Vulnerable Target | 1.93 (0.86) | |
| Video 3 | More Vulnerable Target | 1.87 (0.93) | 1.47 (0.84) |
| | Less Vulnerable Target | 1.74 (0.80) | |
| Video 4 (control) | Target 1 | 1.72 (0.80) | 1.47 (0.73) |
| | Target 2 | 1.77 (0.87) | |

*Note.* The Vulnerability Scale (VS) scores for both targets in Video 4 (control) were similar and within one standard deviation from the mean, hence there is no distinction between high and low vulnerability (see Method section Initial Phase for descriptive statistics).

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed between Dark Triad scores and the number of cues used to assess traits and vulnerability. In

terms of assessing personality and emotional traits, psychopathy scores were positively correlated with the total number of cues used across all four videos ($r = 0.25$, $p = 0.045$). Dark Triad composite scores were also positively correlated with the total number of cues used across all videos ($r = 0.27$, $p = 0.033$), which means that as a whole people high in Dark Triad traits tended to use more cues. Machiavellianism scores were not significantly correlated with the total number of cues used to assess targets' personality and emotional traits ($r = 0.18$, $p = 0.15$), and neither were narcissism scores ($r = 0.22$, $p = 0.09$). No significant relationships were found between any of the Dark Triad scores and the number of cues used to assess targets' vulnerability (all $rs < 0.30$, all $ps > 0.05$).

Correlation analyses were then broken down individually for the high vulnerability and the low vulnerability category. There were positive correlations between psychopathy scores and the number of cues used to assess the more vulnerable targets ($r = 0.25$, $p = 0.045$). Dark Triad composite scores were also positively correlated with the number of cues used to assess the more vulnerable targets ($r = 0.28$, $p = 0.025$). The relationship between perceivers' narcissism scores and the number of cues they used to assess targets in the high vulnerability group appeared to be marginally significant ($r = 0.23$, $p = 0.068$). There were no other significant relationships ($rs < 0.30$, $ps > 0.05$).

Some perceivers described a number of cues that helped them make their judgements, but the first cue reported by each perceiver was regarded as the most salient cue. Cohen's kappa was conducted to quantify the agreement between the two appraisers. With reference to Landis and Koch's (1977) guidelines, substantial agreement between the appraisers was found on which cue categories were described first across all eight targets, with $\kappa > 0.72$, $p < 0.001$. The cue category that appeared first the most for both targets in Videos 1, 3, and 4 was verbal cues (range 36.80% – 43.50%), however in Video 2 the most salient cue category used to assess both targets was impressionistic cues (range 36.40% – 37.70%). Of all the cue categories used to assess vulnerability, the most salient cue category for all four videos was impressionistic cues (>40.00% for each video).

To analyse the association between the Dark Triad and the most salient cue category used to assess personality and emotional traits, a Fisher's Exact test was conducted, with one nominal variable being high and low Dark Triad groups based on median-splits for the respective scale scores, and the other variable being the first

cue category reported by each perceiver. For Video 1, there was a significant association between narcissism and the cue category reported, $\chi^2(5) = 10.06$, $p = 0.038$, $\phi = 0.39$. It appears that the higher the perceivers' narcissism scores, the more likely they were to report using verbal cues to assess targets' traits, but the less likely they were to report using body language as a cue. For Video 4 (control), it is worth pointing out that, although not statistically significant, the higher the perceivers' psychopathy scores, the less likely they were to report using verbal cues as a primary cue to assess targets' traits, but the more likely they were to use body language, $\chi^2(3) = 5.96$, $p = 0.09$, $\phi = 0.31$. For Videos 2 and 3, there were no significant associations between the Dark Triad traits and the most salient cue category used to assess targets' traits (all $p$s > 0.05).

## Discussion

The present study examined the relationship between the Dark Triad constructs and accuracy in judging personality traits and identifying vulnerability. Overall, there was high agreement about each target's personality traits among all perceivers. There was generally little discrepancy between how the perceivers rated the targets and how the targets rated themselves, however, this was not the case for the judgement of targets' self-esteem. Perceivers across the board seemed to be consistently inaccurate in judging targets' self-esteem, indicating low self-other agreement.

If high consensus is taken as a proxy for judgement accuracy, one may then conclude that people with higher levels of Dark Triad traits are no better at personality judgement than the general population. However, the drawback with using self-other agreement as an indicator for judgement accuracy is that it considers the self to be an accurate judge of his or her own personality, which is only true when one can willingly and adequately provide accurate self-judgements (Hofstee, 1994). Nonetheless, when examining the findings from the multivariate regression analyses, people higher in Machiavellianism were indeed better at judging targets' self-esteem. Higher Machiavellianism scores within perceivers were also associated with higher "victim" selection accuracy, suggesting that Machiavellians may very well be accurate at judging vulnerability.

Having said that, based on inconsistencies in the current findings, it is premature to assume that higher Dark Triad scores are associated with better

judgement accuracy. However, generally speaking, people high in Dark Triad traits did not perform worse at identifying targets' personality and emotional traits. The mixed results obtained here challenge the notion that Dark Triad individuals lack the ability to process others' emotional states (Jonason & Krause, 2013; Wai & Tiliopoulos, 2012). Indeed, based on the regression analyses, perceivers high in psychopathy did show some deficits in judging targets' self-esteem across all four videos, yet higher psychopathy scores were associated with lower self-esteem scores given to targets in the high vulnerability group, which perhaps suggests that psychopaths are accurate at identifying traits predictive of vulnerability.

Although perceivers in the current study were generally accurate at assessing assertiveness, there were no relationships between perceivers' Dark Triad traits and their accuracy in judging targets' assertiveness. Interestingly, as discussed before, the study by Book et al. (2007) found people high in psychopathy to have an improved accuracy in assessments of other's assertiveness, but this requires corroboration, as it was not shown in the current study; to say that high-scorers of psychopathy are not poor at judging assertiveness is not the same as saying they are particularly good at it.

Overall, the relationships between Dark Triad scores and judgement tendencies indicated that people with higher levels of dark personalities generally tend to view vulnerable targets as having low self-esteem and as highly empathic, which are traits predictive of vulnerability. These findings are congruent with negative–other models, whereby Dark Triad individuals have a tendency to evaluate others negatively (Black, Woodworth, & Porter, 2014). Individuals inclined to such biased perception of others have been found to be less agreeable and have a sense of superiority over others. Indeed, narcissists are prone to react negatively to specific threats on their grandiose self-concept (Stucke & Sporer, 2002), and even in the absence of ego threat, narcissists tend to engage in other-derogation (Park & Colvin, 2015). Machiavellians hold a global cynical, misanthropic view, and tend to have more condescending views of others (Rauthmann & Will, 2011), consistent with Christie and Geis's (1970) initial conceptualisation in which Machiavellians see others as weak, cowardly, and easily led. A study by Simon et al. (1990) found women Machiavellians to be less able to decode non-verbal emotional indicators, but being masterful manipulators, it was proposed that female Machiavellians in the study may have actively suppressed their sensitivity to facial cues as a strategy (as

opposed to showing deficits in identifying emotions) in order to be emotionally detached from others. Supporting this view, Rosenthal, Hall, DiMatteo, Rogers, and Archer (1979) pointed out that people who are interpersonally sensitive tend to be less dogmatic and less Machiavellian. This suggests that Machiavellians may be effective social manipulators not due to their capability to read others, but because they remain insensitive to and detached from others. This implies that people with high levels of dark personalities are not necessarily better (or worse) at assessing personality, they just possess a negative–other bias.

One point worth noting is that, as reported in Chapter 3 (see p. 62), males in the sample of the current project ($N = 50$) scored significantly higher than females ($N = 109$) on each Dark Triad trait, replicating previous findings. Males have reported higher scores on Machiavellianism (e.g., McHoskey, 2001), psychopathy (e.g., Neumann, Schmitt, Carter, Embley, & Hare, 2012), and narcissism (for a review, see Grijalva et al., 2015), though the magnitude of difference varies across constructs and the assessment instruments used. Men, in general, have also been found to have lower agreeableness scores than women (Budaev, 1999; Costa, Terracciano, & McCrae, 2001; Weisberg, DeYoung, & Hirsh, 2011), and less agreeable people tend to be less trusting and view others in a more negative light. However, it is acknowledged that the unbalanced male to female ratio in the current sample is one of the limitations.

In the current study, it was found that individuals higher in psychopathy were less likely to focus on verbal indicators when assessing others. There have been previous studies suggesting that people high on the Dark Triad spectrum use fewer cues when evaluating others, relying more heavily on "intuition" (Black et al., 2014). Wheeler et al. (2009), in their study, had psychopathic individuals specify the cues used to select victims; it was found that despite being accurate at identifying people who had previously been victimised, those scoring high in psychopathy had difficulties articulating the specific cues they used in making such assessments. An early study also found convicted criminals to have trouble explaining the criteria they had used for victim selection (Amir, 1971). One possible interpretation of these findings is that convicted criminal offenders typically have lower literacy levels; a report by Davies, Lewis, Byatt, Purvis, and Cole (2004) showed that a high proportion of offenders in the United Kingdom had reading and writing skills below the level of a competent 11-year old, suggesting that the inability to verbally describe

how they assessed their victims could stem from poor vocabulary. The point on psychopaths being less verbally intelligent (DeLisi, Vaughn, Beaver, & Wright, 2009) is relevant, because it may explain why they rely on, or prefer to focus on other cues such as body language instead of verbal cues. Nonetheless, considering the majority of the participants in the present study were students or white-collar workers, one can presume they had at least average verbal abilities. The fact that non-verbal cues were particularly salient to them is interesting because this potentially indicates that it may not be a difficulty related to verbal ability but a factor associated with their personality.

In addition, there was no relationship between Dark Triad traits and cues used for overall vulnerability judgements. However, contrary to the previous findings discussed in the paragraph above, people higher in Dark Triad traits reported using more cues to assess one's personality and emotional traits. In a study by Crossley, Woodworth, Black and Hare (2016) that looked at Dark Triad traits and success in negotiation, it was revealed that psychopathic and Machiavellian individuals were better at face-to-face negotiations as opposed to online communications. Findings from the study by Crossley and colleagues suggest that people high in Dark Triad traits rely on a visual medium to spot other people's weaknesses in order to take advantage of them, which might also explain results of the current study. Settings that provide contextual cues (both verbal and non-verbal) appear to be more advantageous for manipulative and disagreeable personalities.

In contrast with individuals high in psychopathy, the current study found the high narcissistic tendency group to rely more on verbal cues than body language when assessing others. This finding was rather tricky to interpret, since previous studies have reported mixed results regarding narcissists' ability to discern emotional states of others. On one hand, Watson, Grisham, Trotter, and Biderman (1984) argued that ego factors in the narcissist may cause them to focus on the self, hence inhibiting empathy. On the other hand, Wai and Tiliopoulos (2012) have indicated that narcissists possess a superior ability to read others' emotions, therefore it is more intuitive to assume that narcissists are more attuned to non-verbal cues. One possible explanation for the present result is that accurate identification of personality and emotional traits requires a degree of assessment of changes in micro-expressions of the face and micro-movements of the body, but the narcissist's preoccupation with the self may have led to reduced sensitivity to such rapid changes

in these behavioural indicators. Regardless, participants with higher narcissism scores were in fact inaccurate at judging targets in the less vulnerable group, replicating findings from a study by Friedman, Oltmanns, and Turkheimer (2007). This potentially suggests that they may have overrated their ability to judge the traits of others (Ames & Kammrath, 2004). This propensity of narcissists to overestimate their own social judgement, combined with the tendency to evaluate others negatively, make them effective manipulators.

It appears that each of the individual components of the Dark Triad manifest differently in terms of how they perceive different personality and emotional traits, reflecting the varied nature of the Dark Triad construct. Although all Dark Triad personalities seem to generally reflect negative–other propensities, findings across all four videos reported little consistent convergence for the Dark Triad in terms of trait judgements. These observations seem sensible when one returns to the conceptual roots of each Dark Triad construct, as the profiles of each trait points to three rather distinctive personalities. For example, whilst Machiavellians have a dim view of others, they tend not to show signs of self-enhancement (Paulhus & Williams, 2002), unlike narcissists who derogate others in efforts to buttress the grandiose self (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). One would therefore expect different behavioural outcomes without obliterating their overlapping nature.

Furthermore, as shown in Chapter 3, the intercorrelations among the Dark Triad traits in the current project were moderate at best (range 0.27 to 0.58), suggesting that they should be treated as distinct traits (see p. 63). As asserted by Glenn and Sellbom (2015), positive intercorrelations do not imply a theoretical rationale for combining the Dark Triad traits into a single measure, as this approach does not add any additional understanding to the literature. The practicality of the simplistic unification approach appears limited, as it is clear from empirical research that despite substantial overlap reported in some studies, the Dark Triad constructs differ in important ways (for a review, see Jones & Paulhus, 2011a). In another review by Furnham et al. (2013), it was revealed that when appropriate regression analyses are applied, the distinction among the Dark Triad outcomes becomes more apparent. The findings from the current study reflect this. It is therefore imperative to recognise the complexity and subtle nuance of each Dark Triad trait, and that by converging the traits to a single dark factor there is a risk of reducing information.

**Limitations and Future Directions**

As discussed previously, one of the challenges in judgement accuracy studies is the criterion used to determine accuracy. Each type of criterion measure captures valid aspects of personality but at the same time entails blind spots, so a more fruitful line of research in the future is to assess accuracy by including judgements about the target through multiple sources. In contexts with information paucity such as the use of thin slices in the present study, it is difficult to say how much accuracy one should expect. Judgement accuracy researchers typically evaluate the magnitude of accuracy correlations by comparing the findings against accuracy correlations found in other contexts. With most research papers discussing the Big Five trait judgements, there are limited values available to provide context for interpreting the degree of accuracy correlations obtained in the current study.

The paradigm used in this study was controlled in a way that provided no possibility of perceiver–target interaction. However, in reality, interpersonal perception is a two-sided experience; perceivers do not view their targets through one-way mirrors. Some researchers argue that it is totally arbitrary to label one of the participants as the judge and the other as the target because in a real world setting both sides would be judging each other during their interaction (Tagiuri, 1969). It is acknowledged that in interpersonal perception, the stimulus, or 'target' is naturally occurring and will change when interacting with different 'perceivers'. In a review by Farrington (1993) that examines repeat victimisation among school children, it was revealed that some juvenile offenders choose their bullying target on the basis of a perceived vulnerability that goes beyond simple environmental opportunities. These findings illustrate the impact of the interactive context, showing that the victimisation experience may change the victim's self-identity in such a way as to produce behaviours that tend to elicit more aggressive responses from others. Besides, as noted by Swann (1984), interaction can enhance judgement accuracy; together with the tendency to generally perceive others as vulnerable, this gives Dark Triad individuals an edge over their targets. In the future, one could use a laboratory paradigm where participants high in the Dark Triad traits directly interact with other participants, and then assess their judgement accuracy.

The properties of the measures used to assess the Dark Triad play a vital role when examining the construct as a whole. For instance, general concerns regarding low internal consistency of the MACH-IV and social desirability issues within the

NPI have proven problematic, and could result in considerable methodological shortcomings. These limitations tend to be overlooked in the literature and should be addressed more comprehensively in future studies. Having said that, all three Dark Triad measures in the current project had acceptable full scale alpha reliabilities ($\alpha > 0.60$).

**Conclusion**

To conclude, there was no concrete evidence that Dark Triad individuals are accurate at assessing personality and detecting vulnerability due to inconsistent findings. The current study found that judgement accuracy varied among the Dark Triad traits, suggesting that they do not result in similar social outcomes, particularly in interpersonal perceptions. Consistent with the conclusions made by Paulhus and Williams (2002), the data from the current study do not support the proposition that the three traits are equivalent when measured within a non-clinical population. The weak to moderate intercorrelations among all Dark Triad traits, together with their distinct theoretical conceptualisation, do not sufficiently substantiate the unificationist approach. As such, while it is worthwhile to investigate Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism alongside one another, there is little rationale and practicality in merging these traits into a single measure. By attempting to be more efficient, it is arguably easier for researchers to use condensed measures for each social or psychological construct to enable more variables to be assessed simultaneously, but this reductionist approach may compromise one's understanding of the construct.

In general, Dark Triad personalities seem to hold a negative–other bias, which is consistent with its conception considering that Machiavellians, narcissists, and psychopaths have a tendency to display dominance and superiority in social situations.

While social exploitation seems to be due to factors about individuals, and while a great deal is known about characteristics of manipulators and victims, it is reasonable to assume that exploitations occur from the interaction between potential manipulators and potential victims in contexts that provide these opportunities. The discussions here raise issues on a broader level in the research area of the Dark Triad.

**Chapter 5:   The Role of Vulnerability in the Perception of Dark Triad Behaviours**

*Men are so simple and so obedient to present necessities that he who deceives will find someone who will let himself be deceived.*

– The Prince, Niccolò Machiavelli (1951/1998)

**Introduction**

People with high levels of Dark Triad personalities typically have behaviours that generate a serious and enduring negative effect upon individuals, families, organisations, communities, and societies exposed to their exploitation.  National leaders such as Adolf Hitler, Mao Zedong, and Joseph Stalin were destructive tyrants responsible for the deaths of millions, yet, by their own terms, their regimes were successful in some of their political, economic, and social aims, and they continue to have adherents who see them as national heroes (e.g., Lipman, Gudkov, & Bakradze, 2013; Waldron, 2005).  Even Mother Teresa who won a Nobel Peace Prize for her charitable work with the poor, received criticism for her alleged misuse of funds, questionable political contacts, and dubious ways of caring for the sick (e.g., Chatterjee, 2003; Hitchens, 2012).  Despite being officially declared a saint, some might question whether her ends justified her means.  This implies that Mother Teresa, much like other leaders motivated by self-interest (and perhaps social interest as well), nurtured strong followings and influenced them in dogged pursuit of her prime motive (i.e., converting others to Christianity), suggesting that even non-destructive leaders are not invariably good.  Following up from the literature review in Chapter 1, not only can Lipman-Blumen's (2005) idea of toxicity be applied to political and organisational leadership, it is also applicable to any interpersonal relationship.

It is therefore worth examining how Dark Triad personalities are perceived by others.  This question is important, because understanding the perceived attractiveness of Dark Triad individuals' may also allow one to explain seemingly misguided relationship choices.  Dark Triad individuals who are captivating and assertive often appear fascinating upon first impression (Back, Schmukle, & Egloff, 2010), but in the long run they are unable to live up to expectations, whether it be in committed long-term romantic relationships or workplace relationships.

The second study of the current project, presented in this chapter, is focused on the role of vulnerability in the perceptions of people high on the Dark Triad measures. To begin with, it is important to consider what makes self-absorbed, controlling, and disagreeable Dark Triad individuals appealing as mates.

**The Appeal of Men with Dark Triad Personalities**

Much of the media attention surrounding one of the most common and perpetuating beliefs of romantic relationships that women are attracted to "bad boys", seems to stem from anecdotes. According to this notion, even though women often portray themselves as wanting male partners who are kind, sensitive, and emotionally expressive, they in fact place higher preference for "macho men" who are insensitive and emotionally unavailable (Urbaniak & Kilmann, 2003).

Nonetheless, this belief seems to have attained the status of a truism in the Dark Triad literature. In popular culture, people who embody these apparently maladaptive traits such as grandiosity and callousness, appear to have popularity, especially in fictional media. More commonly known as antiheroes or antiheroines, they are protagonists who lack more conventional heroic attributes such as idealism. Morally complex male characters like James Bond and Batman (a.k.a. The Dark Knight) frequently assume the role of a vigilante and operate outside the law, but these media franchises still continue on after decades since their first release. Jonason, Webster, Schmitt, Li, and Crysel (2012) used life history theory to propose that certain aspects of the Dark Triad may be valued in modern culture, drawing examples from both the media and reality. It was also suggested that despite the dictatorial control or bad behaviour that people high in Dark Triad traits exercise, such traits may potentially confer survival benefits, offering an explanation as to why these unpleasant behaviours have persevered.

Men tend to have significantly higher Dark Triad scores than women (e.g., Jonason, Li, & Buss, 2010; Jonason & Webster, 2010). In light of this gender difference, it has been proposed that the Dark Triad may represent an evolved male adaptation that facilitates short-term mating (Jonason et al., 2009). If this is the case, then Dark Triad qualities should be attractive to women.

In terms of physical appeal, people with psychopathic and narcissistic tendencies are said to exhibit favourable physical characteristics to attract people when giving initial impressions (Fowler, Lilienfeld, & Patrick, 2009; Holtzman &

Strube, 2010). Expanding this line of research, Holtzman and Strube (2012) provided evidence that all three Dark Triad traits are associated with effective adornment (e.g., clothing), proposing that Dark Triad individuals construct their appearances to act as social lures in order to facilitate their manipulation strategies. From an evolutionary point of view, Marcinkowska, Lyons, and Helle (2016) assessed the relationship between females' preference for Dark Triad males' facial characteristics and their mating success. Their findings showed that women with stronger preference for faces of narcissistic males reported giving birth to a higher number of offspring for their age. These research findings imply that women's preference for the physical attributes of Dark Triad individuals may play a role in their reproductive success.

Carter et al. (2014) investigated the attractiveness of male Dark Triad personalities to women, independent of physical appearance. In the study, female participants were presented with two self-descriptions that represented male characters, one with high Dark Triad facets of personality and the other a control personality. Women gave the Dark Triad character significantly higher ratings of attractiveness as compared to the control character. The question then arises as to whether the attractiveness of Dark Triad personalities reside in female choice, or in the ability of the Dark Triad individual to persuade and manipulate. The former suggests that more studies should be done to explore the characteristics of those who are drawn to individuals high in Dark Triad traits. To examine the latter, there is a need to investigate how these individuals are perceived in terms of their personality and to what extent they are seen as appealing.

Narcissism, often considered as the least "dark" of the triad, is characterised by dominance, social boldness, and outgoingness (Back et al., 2010; Küfner, Nestler, & Back, 2013), which are attributes typically associated with positive outcomes. Indeed, in a series of three studies, Dufner, Rauthmann, Czarna, and Denissen (2013) found narcissism to have a positive effect on mate appeal in both laboratory and real-life settings, suggesting that narcissism advances short-term mating in men. However, at longer acquaintance, narcissists are deemed to be more disagreeable (Dufner et al., 2012). It is argued that narcissists are unable and/or unwilling to live up to the initial positive impression they give others, and that they constantly move on to new social contexts (Campbell & Campbell, 2009). Nonetheless, narcissists

are adept at entering these new relationships and taking advantage of multiple mating opportunities.

According to a study by Visser, Pozzebon, Bogaert, and Ashton (2010), men with higher psychopathy scores rated themselves and were rated by others to be significantly more physically and sexually attractive. Higher psychopathy in men was also associated with lower appearance anxiety and lower body shame. This suggests that psychopathy may have a positive influence on both physical appeal and interpersonal characteristics.

Machiavellians have been found to be more likely than non-Machiavellians to be described as clever, bold, ambitious, dominating, persuasive, confident, relaxed, and talented – traits which are commonly perceived as positive (Cherulnik, Way, Ames, & Hutto, 1981). Moreover, Machiavellianism has been found to be positively correlated with extraversion (Allsopp, Eysenck, & Eysenck, 1991), which is very often associated with higher popularity and flirtatiousness (Back et al., 2011). Machiavellians are also reported to have a tendency towards sexual promiscuity and a higher rate of mating success (Linton & Wiener, 2001), presenting them with a special reproductive advantage. One probable explanation is that Machiavellians are likely to deceive and coerce partners into sex, as Machiavellianism has been found to be positively related to an array of hostile, self-serving tactics in romantic relationships (McHoskey, 2001).

These viewpoints are consistent with findings that individuals high in Dark Triad traits are more likely to gain social influence and power through the use of forceful tactics that may include intimidation, aggression, or charm (Jonason & Webster, 2012). That said, many individuals, particularly women, are said to be sexually attracted to those who are socially dominant (Sadalla, Kenrick, & Vershure, 1987), but not in an aggressive or domineering way (Snyder, Kirkpatrick, & Barrett, 2008); in fact, Sadalla and colleagues reported that women rated those who are domineering and aggressive to be lower on general likeability (i.e., less warm, more unpleasant). One interpretation of this finding is that dominant individuals often behave in ways that make them appear competent, even if they lack the actual abilities, as suggested by Anderson and Kilduff (2009). Taken together, the evidence show that those who possess traces of Dark Triad tendencies are linked to successful pursuits of short-term mating strategies (Jauk et al., 2016), suggesting that they are indeed desirable. The difficulty here is then to determine whether it is the

prosocial (e.g., charm) characteristics in these men that make women drawn to them, or the antisocial (e.g., control) aspects that make women vulnerable to them.

In a study by Rauthmann and Kolar (2013) that used vignettes as a means of examining the likability or appeal of the three components of Dark Triad personalities, it was reported that while all three traits were not perceived as particularly attractive, relative to the Machiavellian and psychopath, the narcissist was judged more favourably. However, perceivers' characteristics were not accounted for in that particular study. As highlighted before, in real-life settings, perceptions involve two parties, hence it would be helpful to look at the characteristics of individuals who are likely to be held in thrall of people with aversive traits, as well as their perceptions of such destructive behaviours. This is an aspect the current study sought to uncover.

## Vulnerability and the Dynamics of the 'Victim'–'Perpetrator' Relationship

The discussions above point to the idea that many people are drawn to individuals high in Dark Triad traits not only because they possess physical and psychological attributes that are appealing, but also because such individuals are highly manipulative. These manipulative behaviours can bring about serious harm, often involving aggression and violence. Despite being used interchangeably, these two terms differ: aggression involves the use of force in order to physically or verbally dominate an opponent or rival, whereas violence involves using force with the intent to cause physical harm. The Dark Triad has been found to be associated with both aggression and violence in empirical research (Baughman, Dearing, Giammarco, & Vernon, 2012; Kerig & Stellwagen, 2010; Pailing et al., 2014; Westhead & Egan, 2015).

For example, the relationship between the Dark Triad and intimate partner violence has been recently looked into by Carton and Egan (2017). It was found that low agreeableness and psychopathic elements of the Dark Triad were the most predictive indicators of psychological and physical/sexual abuse, including the use of dominance, intimidation, denigration, and restrictive engulfment. It was noted that relational dynamics between the perpetrator and victim in intimate partner violence are often reciprocal. For instance, it was found that an individual's low levels of agreeableness, openness, and neuroticism were associated with his or her partner's perpetration of abuse, implying that these victim traits may have provoked the

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aggression or violence perpetrated by the other party. This is not to suggest a 'victim-blaming' attitude, simply that the findings lend support to the argument that victim characteristics and reactions play a major reciprocal role in the perpetration of abuse.

Indeed, the literature suggests a 'victim proneness' typology (Sparks, 1981), in which victims of exploitation are said to display a distinct set of characteristics that signify vulnerability. It is therefore of interest to analyse how factors proprietary to the victim may be involved in the attraction and development of social manipulation and victimisation.

A meta-analysis of cross-sectional studies between 1978 and 1997 by Hawker and Boulton (2000) revealed that children who experience being a target of peer aggression appear to have more negative affect (e.g., depression and anxiety) and think more negatively about themselves. Olweus (1993) argued that most victims possess a submissive profile, where they tend to be anxious, insecure, and sensitive. Kaplan (1980) also noted that peer aggression occurs especially when victims are seen as unwilling or unable to retaliate. More recent studies with teenagers replicated this pattern of findings, where sadness and hopelessness were found to be significantly associated with victimisation (Bond, Carlin, Thomas, Rubin, & Patton, 2001; Jeong, Davis, Rodriguez, & Han, 2016). Display of characteristics such as loneliness, sadness, anxiety indicates weakness, which then increases the likelihood of subsequent aggressive behaviour, suggesting that these tendencies are likely to be both antecedents and consequences of victimisation (Craig, 1998; Matsui, Kakuyama, Tsuzuki, & Onglatco, 1996; Neves, 2014).

The upshot is that the characteristics of both the manipulator and the target of manipulation need to be considered in examining perceptions of exploitative behaviours. Within the workplace context, consistent evidence has also shown that certain people are targeted for victimisation due to their own dispositional characteristics and/or behaviour (for a review, see Bowling & Beehr, 2006). Milam, Spitzmueller, and Penney (2009) revealed that emotional stability and agreeableness had negative correlations with being a target of workplace incivility. That being said, Glasø, Matthiesen, Nielsen, and Einarsen (2007) found victims of workplace bullying to score lower on agreeableness, which contradicts findings from other studies (e.g., Coyne, Seigne, & Randall, 2000). A recent meta-analysis by Nielsen, Glasø, and Einarsen (2017) also confirmed a negative relationship between

agreeableness and exposure to workplace harassment. One interpretation of this relationship is that people who are less agreeable are more mistrustful and are likely to behave in ways that provoke others.

Theoretically, however, agreeableness is characterised by an active concern for the welfare of others (Costa & McCrae, 1992), where agreeable people are less likely to ruminate or are more likely to empathise with people who have wronged them (Ashton, Paunonen, Helmes, & Jackson, 1998). Therefore, the current study also aimed to shed some light to the case of agreeableness, by looking at the associations between vulnerability and the Big Five personality traits.

Furthermore, Bowling, Beehr, Bennett, and Watson (2010) argued that those with a chronically poor self-evaluation may be easy targets for manipulators. It was also suggested that employees who often experience negative emotions such as anxiety and depression may behave in ways that may induce the enactment of bullying towards them. Overall, the literature seems to suggest that personality traits may function as both predictors and outcomes of bullying in the workforce (Nielsen & Knardahl, 2015).

Kiazad, Restubog, Zagenczyk, Kiewitz, and Tang (2010) considered the interplay between perpetrator and victim dispositional characteristics in influencing perceptions of abusive supervision in the workplace. Findings of their study revealed that supervisors high in Machiavellianism were viewed as abusive as their work habits reflected authoritarian leadership behaviours. However, employees with lower organisation-based self-esteem were also found to be more affected by authoritarian leadership. On one hand, Kiazad and his team argued that subordinates who enact a "submissive victim role", characterised by low self-esteem and lack of assertiveness, tend to undergo repeated victimisation as perpetrators believe that the victims lack the ability to retaliate. On the other hand, some studies have proposed that perpetrator factors, such as personality and leadership behaviour, contribute more strongly to occurrences of abusive supervision when a vulnerable target is available (Tepper, Duffy, Henle, & Lambert, 2006).

**Plight of the Vulnerable and Victimised**

A few previous studies have documented the correlates and consequences of victimisation as well as the victims' perceptions of their own status. It is apparent

that victimisation is rarely targeted randomly, it is thus useful to explore how victims construe the reasons for their plight.

To understand reactions to interpersonal manipulation, it is useful to consider the victim's causal perceptions or attributions of why they are/have been targeted. It is possible that victims might come to blame themselves for being in such detrimental circumstances. Self-blame, together with feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and low self-worth fit into the victims' self-perceptions of victim status (Graham & Juvonen, 1998). According to Janoff-Bulman (1979), there are two types of self-blame, namely behavioural and characterological. Behavioural self-blame corresponds to an effort attribution, in other words, the fault lies in one's own actions, and hence it is deemed more modifiable. Characterological self-blame corresponds to an ability attribution, which means that the fault lies in one's character, therefore it is considered relatively non-alterable. This distinction is relevant because characterological self-blame implies that the victim, due to inherent and enduring qualities within themselves, cannot do anything about the perpetrator's bad behaviour.

It also appears that clinical counsellors often deal with victims of physical and emotional abuse who repeatedly return to their abusive relationships. Apart from economic dependencies, which can influence a person's decision to go back to a dysfunctional relationship, psychological factors play a role. For instance, there have been objective and subjective data showing that some individuals believe they can work through problems with their abusive partner and are committed to salvage the relationship (Herbert, Silver, & Ellard, 1991; Strube & Barbour, 1983).

Burnett (1996) drew on clinical case studies to explain that female victims of domestic abuse, particularly those who are strongly religious, often use rationalisation as a strategy to cope with the abuse experience. She found that the use of self-blame is a typical response to, and justification for having been physically and emotionally attacked. Further, women who convince themselves that they provoked the assault (after having been convinced by the abusive partner, as is often the case), may feel responsible for the behaviour of the partner, thus justifying his violent actions. As discussed in Chapter 1, people high in psychopathy may surround themselves with religious people because members of faith groups are more accepting of people of various backgrounds. In Burnett's case studies, it was observed that many Christian women who believe in the sanctity of marriage feel

compelled by their faith to remain in abusive relationships, due to the belief that physical and emotional abuse are hardships of married life that one has to endure. Similarly, Bergen (1996) interviewed 40 survivors of marital rape and found that many of them rationalised the violence against them through self-blame, feeling that they failed in their roles as wives, while minimising the severity of the abuse as a coping mechanism.

Consider another example taken from a study by Bonomi, Nichols, Carotta, Kiuchi, and Perry (2016) that investigated young women's perceptions of the relationship between Christian Grey and Anastasia Steele, the two main characters from the fictional film *Fifty Shades of Grey*. The movie (adapted from the book by E. L. James, 2011) depicts a romantic and sadomasochistic relationship between a handsome and sexually experienced billionaire named Grey and a sexually inexperienced university student named Steele. The basic tenets of the narrative include Grey using various physical and verbal intimidation in an attempt to sexually engage and subdue Steele. Bonomi and colleagues recruited adult women to watch the film and take part in focus groups to discuss their perceptions about the relationship between Grey and Steele. The study found that participants viewed parts of the relationship as exciting and romantic (e.g., Grey taking Steele into his helicopter on their first date), but at the same time, participants sympathised with and rationalised Grey's manipulative and abusive behaviours as a function of his personality, troubled past, needs, and abilities. It is apparent that challenges in holding abusers accountable arise, especially when they are capable of using manipulation strategies to elicit others' sympathy. Those who are more prone to sympathising with others' feelings, such as those who are high in agreeableness, are likely to be a subset of those with a higher chance of being socially manipulated.

Another common dating maxim is that women believe they can "fix" or change their male partners, as illustrated in numerous relationship advice books that are widely available (e.g., Glass, 2010; Gray, 2008). Psychologists, especially from the popular literature, have observed that one of the reasons why a woman chooses to stay with her controlling partner is the belief that she can make him a better person (Hartwell-Walker, 2016; Meyers, 2012). It appears that this area has yet to be examined systematically. However, from empirical evidence, it has been shown that controlling and abusive partners often rationalise, justify, and apologise for their own behaviour (Cavanagh, Dobash, Dobash, & Lewis, 2001; Dobash & Dobash, 2011),

hence it has been suggested that expressions of forgiveness and the trust that the abuser will not repeat the behaviour might fuel these rationalisations. This attitude of the victim may reinforce uneven power distributions within a relationship that is abusive, giving the impression of tolerance for abuse (Lamb, 2002).

Similar 'victim proneness' typology can be found in the organisational context. Lipman-Blumen (2005) proposed that many followers create rationalisations by convincing themselves that they are incapable of opposing the destructive leader, which is why they often do not challenge their unreasonable behaviours. Earlier scholars such as Weber (1968) proposed that followers often consider charismatic qualities (which are typical of Dark Triad individuals) to be extraordinary, and the followers' devotion to the extraordinary is amplified by psychological distress. As Conger and Kanungo (1987) pointed out, charismatic leaders offer idealised visions and radical change that are generally widely discrepant from reality, fostering dissatisfaction among followers and causing distress. Likewise, Fromm (1941) argued that the followers' loyalty or even submission to leaders stems from the need to feel identified with a larger group, and followers are often willing to surrender their own freedom in exchange of security and pride for belonging to a powerful group.

The discussions presented above draw primarily upon literature from contexts such as intimate partner violence, peer bullying at school, workplace harassment, and political leadership. It can be observed that political leadership points to a conspicuous absence of experimental evidence, perhaps due to the elusive nature of leadership practice. Nonetheless, the main argument to be made here is that an understanding of both manipulator and victim characteristics, as well as the environmental contexts that make social manipulation possible, is essential to further understand harmful interpersonal behaviours, be it in a romantic or organisational context.

### Current Study and Hypotheses

The aims of the present study were to capture the characteristics of individuals who have a tendency to unknowingly enable people with high levels of dark personalities (e.g., through tolerating unpleasant behaviours, not challenging unethical conduct, etc.), as well as to assess the perceptions of these 'enablers', in an attempt to understand their underlying thought processes. A deeper understanding of

the enablers' perception of people high in Dark Triad personalities may help reduce the social, emotional, financial, and even physical costs for those susceptible to social manipulation. The relationships between vulnerability to social manipulation and the Big Five personality traits were first examined. In light of the bullying, intimate partner violence, and work harassment literature, it was hypothesised that low extraversion, high agreeableness, high conscientiousness, high neuroticism, and low openness would be predictors of vulnerability to interpersonal manipulation.

Social manipulation occurs when people enable the behaviour of those high in Dark Triad traits. Given that high-scorers of the Dark Triad are skilled when it comes to taking advantage of others' desires and fears, it is important to understand how people perceive incidences of manipulation. These perceptions and attitudes were investigated in more detail using vignettes. In response to vignettes depicting interpersonal exploitation, it was anticipated that individuals vulnerable to social manipulation would perceive characters in the vignettes differently from those who are less vulnerable, as measured by their ratings on a series of Likert-type statements and open-ended responses. Vulnerable people were also expected to identify with the victimised characters in the vignettes, as it is likely that they can relate to the characters' experience.

## Method

### Participants

Sixty participants (17 males, 43 females) were purposely selected from a larger sample ($N = 144$) as described in Chapter 3, who completed the Vulnerability Scale and Big Five Inventory in the Initial Phase. The current study used extreme group analysis, by excluding participants from the middle of the distribution on the Vulnerability Scale scores. The bottom 30 participants from the low vulnerability group (i.e., participants with Vulnerability Scale scores below the median [$N = 71$, $M = 38.49$, $SD = 6.68$]) and the top 30 other participants from the high vulnerability group (i.e., participants with Vulnerability Scale scores above the median [$N = 73$, $M = 56.63$, $SD = 6.50$]) were invited to take part in this study.

Of the 60 participants, 40 (66.70%) were aged between 21 to 30 years, six (10.00%) between 31 to 40 years, five (8.30%) between 41 to 50 years, six (10.00%) were 51 or over, while only three (5.00%) were between 18 to 20 years.

**Materials**

**Vignettes.** Vignettes can be defined as stories about individuals and situations that make references to key points in the study of perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs (Hughes, 1998). Vignettes can be developed from an array of sources, including findings from existing research (e.g., Cheek & Jones, 2003), through collaboration with other professionals within the field (e.g., Kalafat, Elias, & Gara, 1993), or based on actual case studies (e.g., Scott & Rosenberg, 1998). Vignettes have been regarded as a robust means of exploring sensitive topics, as they allow individuals some detachment.

Initially, six case stories were constructed, each depicting one character with high levels of Dark Triad traits along with his/her victim of manipulation. The vignettes were selected from real-life cases found in public forums and articles. These included incidences of interpersonal manipulation across various contexts, including workplace, parent–adult child, and intimate partner relationships. The vignettes were then adapted in consultation with a forensic psychologist. After being piloted with a group of academic peers within the University, several refinements were made, whilst drawing upon literature, the items from the standard measurements of each Dark Triad trait, and case study materials in order to establish internal validity. Review and discussions with peers indicated that one of the six vignettes was not an actual portrayal of any of the Dark Triad traits, hence it was removed, resulting in only five vignettes being included in the current study. The main criteria for the fictitious profiles of Dark Triad traits were that they had to portray features of callousness and manipulation as these two are considered the core of the Dark Triad (Jones & Figueredo, 2013; Paulhus, 2014).

The vignettes were written so that they were in a third person's point of view and of equal length. To avoid gender bias, both males and females represented the Dark Triad characters and victims across the vignettes. Across all five vignettes there were three male and two female Dark Triad characters, along with two male and three female victims (Appendix 5.1).

Each vignette was followed by eight 5-point Likert-type statements, with scales running from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A template of the scale is shown below. In the actual vignettes and scales, pseudonyms were used to represent the *Victim* and the *Dark Triad character*:

1. *Victim* is fully responsible for how *Dark Triad character* has been treating him/her.

2. *Dark Triad character* is fully responsible for how he/she has been treating *Victim*.

3. The ways in which *Victim* reacted to *Dark Triad character's* behaviour were understandable.

4. There are good reasons to rationalise and tolerate *Dark Triad character's* behaviour.

5. *Victim* should change his/her behaviour.

6. *Dark Triad character* should change his/her behaviour.

7. If given a chance, *Victim* can make an effort to change his/her behaviour.

8. If given a chance, *Dark Triad character* can make an effort to change his/her behaviour.

Three open-ended questions were included:

1. What are your impressions of *Dark Triad character*?

2. What are your impressions of *Victim*?

3. Which character in the story do you most identify with, and why?

There were several reasons for the inclusion of these statements and questions. The literature review above has suggested that victims of harassment or victimisation have a propensity to rationalise the behaviours of the manipulator, owing to either self-blame or the belief that the manipulator is able to change his or her destructive behaviour. Therefore, these statements and questions aimed to obtain participants' responses and thoughts on interactions that involve manipulation, as it has been found that responding to a third person's situations may suggest actions similar to which they themselves would take (Rahman, 1996). This distances participants from the current topic that can be classified as difficult or sensitive, and also eases participants' distrust of the researcher, increasing cooperation in research (Hughes & Huby, 2001).

**Procedure**

Participants who were selected to take part in this study were invited via e-mail. This study was web-based; participants were sent a link that allowed access to

vignettes. The link contained information about the study, a consent form, and a debriefing sheet. After consent was given (Appendix 5), participants were asked to read each vignette, then provide ratings for each of the eight Likert-type statements and type their responses to the open-ended statements. On average participants took 45 minutes to complete the study. Participants who completed the study were thanked and sent a debriefing form via e-mail (Appendix 5.2)

**Analytic Strategy**

Due to small sample size, non-normal distributions of data, and individual Likert items that were ordinal-scale, nonparametric tests were carried out to analyse participants' responses to the Likert-type statements.

The responses for the open-ended questions were analysed by means of text analysis and using word count strategies. This multimethod approach, known as *triangulation*, facilitates validation of research findings through cross verification from different data collection and data analysis techniques (Rothbauer, 2008).

**Word-Pattern Analysis.** The most prominent instrument for text analysis that is based on a word count strategy is the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC; Pennebaker et al., 2001). This computer software was originally devised to track language features in people's writing about negative life experiences, in order to predict their subsequent physical and mental health (Pennebaker & Francis, 1996; Pennebaker, Mayne, & Francis, 1997). The latest version, LIWC2015 (Pennebaker, Boyd, Jordan, & Blackburn, 2015), analyses written or transcribed verbal texts by comparing each word against a user-defined dictionary of almost 6,400 words. LIWC categorises words and expresses the output by calculating the percentage of total words in a given text sample.

The default programme for this version has approximately 90 output variables, including summary language dimensions (e.g., analytical thinking, clout, authenticity, emotional tone, words longer than six letters), standard linguistic dimensions (e.g., pronouns, prepositions, negations), psychological constructs (e.g., affect, drives), personal concerns (e.g., work, home, money, death), informal language (e.g., swear, filler words), and punctuation (e.g., commas, exclamation marks). As open-ended questions in the current study were more exploratory in

nature, the analysis included all default output variables of the LIWC2015 dictionary but excluded the punctuation category.

The limitations of this automated language analysis programme have been acknowledged in Chapter 1, but, to examine its usefulness, this analysis method has been included as an exploratory step.

**Text Analysis.** There are two main text analysis methodologies, namely human coding and computer-aided text analysis. Typically, automated or computerised text analyses match words and phrases in texts with dictionaries of key words and phrases that have been previously set up in the software programme, such as the LIWC programme discussed above. However, machine coding is blind to context and makes mostly arbitrary associations between words and phrases, making it unsuitable for more nuanced and sophisticated interpretational work. This is the main fundamental weakness for using software programmes such as LIWC.

Therefore, using the manual human coding technique, the answers in the present study were analysed systematically for frequencies and coded into categories in order to develop inferences. As there are no preliminary models or theories to base the analysis on, these categories were inductively generated from the raw data. Single words, phrases, or sentences with similar meaning were coded into the same category (e.g., "*psychopath*", "*sociopath*" were coded as *personality disorder*) to represent a common theme. According to Neuendorf (2002), this systematic form of data extraction focuses on linking frequency counts of apparent features (positive/negative keywords) to clusters of characteristics (general impressions).

## Results[1]

### Vulnerability Scale and Big Five Inventory

In the Initial Phase, 144 participants completed the Vulnerability Scale and the Big Five Inventory, as described in Chapter 3. A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was first computed to examine the relationships between vulnerability to social manipulation and the Big Five personality traits. As presented in Table 11, total vulnerability scores ($M = 47.69$, $SD = 11.22$) showed significant positive correlations with agreeableness scores ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 0.71$), $r(142) = 0.19$,

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[1] Part of the data reported in this chapter was published under Chung and Charles (2016).

$p = 0.021$, and neuroticism scores ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 0.83$), $r(142) = 0.26$, $p = 0.002$. Vulnerability scores were also significantly negatively correlated with extraversion scores ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 0.92$), $r(142) = –0.19$, $p = 0.022$, and conscientiousness scores ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 0.67$), $r(142) = –0.24$, $p = 0.003$.

Table 11
*Pearson's Correlations between Vulnerability Scale Scores and the Five Personality Domains of the Big Five Inventory (N = 144)*

| | Correlation matrix | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | V | E | A | C | N | O |
| Vulnerability (V) | - | | | | | |
| Extraversion (E) | –0.19* | - | | | | |
| Agreeableness (A) | 0.19* | 0.13 | - | | | |
| Conscientiousness (C) | –0.24** | 0.25** | 0.19* | - | | |
| Neuroticism (N) | 0.26** | –0.31** | –0.13 | –0.44** | - | |
| Openness (O) | –0.06 | 0.07 | 0.04 | 0.01 | 0.10 | - |

*Note.* *$p < 0.05$. **$p < 0.01$

To examine gender differences, if any, in terms of the Big Five personality factors, an independent-samples *t*-test was conducted.  As presented in Table 12, females had significantly higher agreeableness scores ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 0.69$) than males ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 0.72$), $t(142) = –2.43$, $p = 0.017$, $d = 0.45$.  No other significant differences were found (all $p$s > 0.05).

Table 12
*Means and Standard Deviation Scores of the Big Five Inventory for Males (N = 40) and Females (N = 104)*

| | Mean (SD) | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| | Males | Females |
| Extraversion | 3.11 (0.99) | 3.06 (0.90) |
| Agreeableness | 3.29 (0.72) | 3.61 (0.69) |
| Conscientiousness | 3.34 (0.63) | 3.39 (0.69) |
| Neuroticism | 2.96 (0.79) | 3.15 (0.84) |
| Openness | 3.52 (0.62) | 3.66 (0.62) |

**Likert-Type Statements for Vignettes**

**Pooled Ratings Across All Five Vignettes.**  Table 13 shows the differences between the high and low vulnerability group in attitudes towards the Dark Triad character and the Victim.  To establish reliability, the ratings for each Likert-type statement were first pooled across all five vignettes.  According to a Mann-Whitney *U* test, the low vulnerability group agreed significantly more strongly that the Dark

Triad character is fully responsible for his/her actions as compared to the high vulnerability group, with $U = 218.00$, $p < 0.001$. The low vulnerability group disagreed significantly more strongly that there are good reasons to rationalise and tolerate the Dark Triad character's behaviour, $U = 303.00$, $p = 0.029$. No other significant differences were found (all $p$s $> 0.05$).

Table 13
*Differences between the High and Low Vulnerability Group in Attitudes towards the Dark Triad (DT) Characters and the Victims (Pooled Ratings Across Five Vignettes)*

| Likert-type Statements | Group | Mean Ranks | $U$ | $p$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Victim* is fully responsible for how *DT Character* has been treating him/her. | Low Vulnerability | 28.95 | 403.50 | 0.49 |
| | High Vulnerability | 32.05 | | |
| *DT Character* is fully responsible for how he/she has been treating *Victim*. | Low Vulnerability | 38.23 | 218.00 | <0.001** |
| | High Vulnerability | 22.77 | | |
| The ways in which *Victim* reacted to *DT Character's* behaviour were understandable. | Low Vulnerability | 30.07 | 437.00 | 0.85 |
| | High Vulnerability | 30.93 | | |
| There are good reasons to rationalise and tolerate *DT Character's* behaviour. | Low Vulnerability | 25.60 | 303.00 | 0.029* |
| | High Vulnerability | 35.40 | | |
| *Victim* should change his/her behaviour. | Low Vulnerability | 32.53 | 389.00 | 0.37 |
| | High Vulnerability | 28.47 | | |
| *DT Character* should change his/her behaviour. | Low Vulnerability | 34.02 | 344.50 | 0.11 |
| | High Vulnerability | 26.98 | | |
| If given a chance, *Victim* can make an effort to change his/her behaviour. | Low Vulnerability | 32.55 | 388.50 | 0.36 |
| | High Vulnerability | 28.45 | | |
| If given a chance, *DT Character* can make an effort to change his/her behaviour. | Low Vulnerability | 28.88 | 401.50 | 0.47 |
| | High Vulnerability | 32.12 | | |

*Note.* $*p < 0.05$. $**p < 0.01$.

As all five vignettes included incidences of interpersonal manipulation across various contexts, it was of interest to investigate if there were differences across vignettes. Table 14 shows a breakdown of differences between the high and low vulnerability group for each vignette. Due to multiple comparisons, it should be

noted that the probability of reporting a Type I error was elevated. However, Bonferroni corrections were deemed too conservative, raising the likelihood of false negatives. For this reason, and for exploratory purposes, results obtained using a less stringent alpha level (i.e., a threshold of $p < 0.05$) are highlighted below. That said, the most consistent significant difference when a stricter alpha level (i.e., $p < 0.01$) was used was for the response to Statement 2, "*Dark Triad character is fully responsible for how he/she has been treating Victim.*", in which the low vulnerability group agreed significantly more than the high vulnerability group. This finding is in line with the results obtained when ratings across vignettes were pooled.

**Vignettes 1, 3, 4, and 5.** According to a Mann-Whitney $U$ test, the low vulnerability group agreed significantly more strongly that the Dark Triad character is fully responsible for his/her actions as compared to the high vulnerability group, with $U = 297.50$, $p = 0.01$ for Vignette 1; $U = 277.50$, $p = 0.004$ for Vignette 3; $U = 267.00$, $p = 0.003$ for Vignette 4; and $U = 307.50$, $p = 0.023$ for Vignette 5.
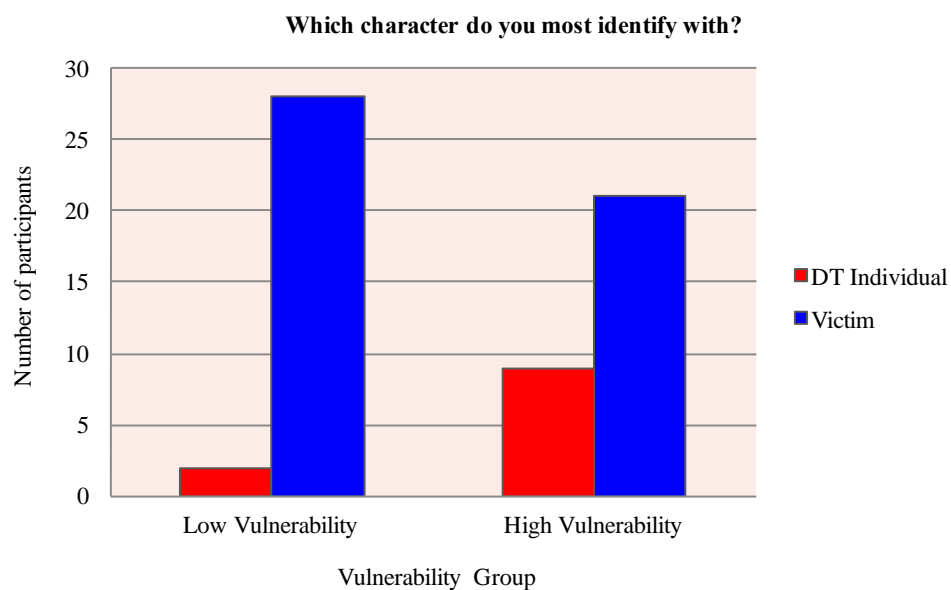


*Figure 4.* Bar chart illustrating character identification of high and low vulnerability groups for Vignette 2.

**Vignette 2.** The low vulnerability group disagreed significantly more strongly that the victim is responsible for his actions, $U = 311.00$, $p = 0.03$. A chi-square test of association revealed a significant relationship between vulnerability and character identification, $\chi^2(1) = 5.46$, $p = 0.02$, $\phi = 0.30$. The high vulnerability

group was more likely to identify with the Dark Triad character, where participants from the high vulnerability group comprised 81.80% of those who identified with the Dark Triad character as compared to only 18.20% from the low vulnerability group (Figure 4).

**Vignette 3.** The low vulnerability group disagreed significantly more strongly that there are good reasons to rationalise and tolerate the Dark Triad character's behaviour, $U = 306.00$, $p = 0.043$.

**Vignette 4.** As a whole, 43.30% of participants reported identifying with the Dark Triad character, whilst only about 20.00% of participants identified with the Dark Triad character in Vignettes 1, 2, 3, and 5 (Figure 5). The presence of infidelity in the victim's behaviour appears to have had an influence on which character participants identified with. The low vulnerability group disagreed significantly more strongly that how the victim reacted to the Dark Triad character's behaviour was understandable, $U = 327.50$, $p = 0.05$, disagreed significantly more strongly that there are good reasons to rationalise and tolerate the Dark Triad character's behaviour, $U = 296.00$, $p = 0.02$, and agreed significantly more strongly that the victim should change his behaviour, $U = 327.50$, $p = 0.05$.

### Which character do you most identify with?

| Vignette | DT Individual | Victim |
|----------|---------------|--------|
| Vignette 1 | 20% | 80% |
| Vignette 2 | 18.30% | 81.70% |
| Vignette 3 | 18.30% | 81.70% |
| Vignette 4 | 41.70% | 58.30% |
| Vignette 5 | 13.30% | 86.70% |
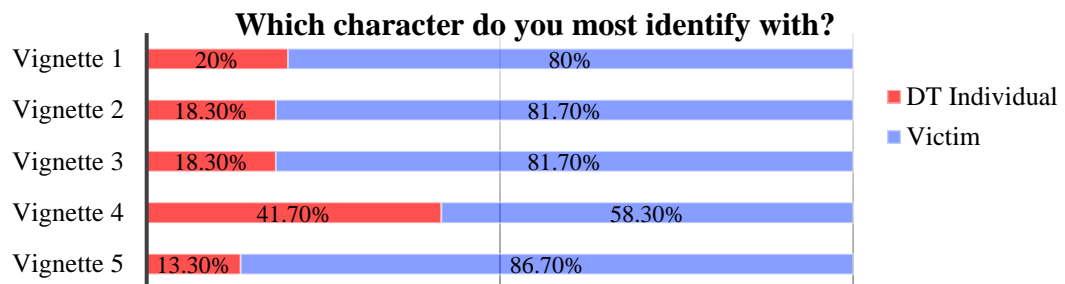
*Figure 5.* Bar chart illustrating character identification of high and low vulnerability groups for all vignettes.

**Vignette 5.** The low vulnerability group agreed significantly more strongly that the Dark Triad character should change her behaviour, $U = 313.50$, $p = 0.028$.

No other significant differences were found (all $p$s > 0.05).

Table 14

*Differences between the High and Low Vulnerability Group in Attitudes towards the Dark Triad (DT) Character and the Victim (Vignettes 1 to 5)*

| | Group | Vignette 1 | | Vignette 2 | | Vignette 3 | | Vignette 4 | | Vignette 5 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Mean Ranks | U | Mean Ranks | U | Mean Ranks | U | Mean Ranks | U | Mean Ranks | U |
| *Victim* is fully responsible for how *DT character* has been treating him/her. | Low Vulnerability | 28.85 | 400.50 | 25.87 | 311.00* | 26.57 | 332.00 | 34.08 | 342.50 | 29.57 | 422.00 |
| | High Vulnerability | 32.15 | | 35.13 | | 34.43 | | 26.92 | | 31.43 | |
| *DT character* is fully responsible for how he/she has been treating *Victim*. | Low Vulnerability | 35.58 | 297.50** | 34.05 | 343.50 | 36.25 | 277.50** | 36.60 | 267.00** | 35.25 | 307.50* |
| | High Vulnerability | 25.42 | | 26.95 | | 24.75 | | 24.40 | | 25.75 | |
| The ways in which *Victim* reacted to *DT character's* behaviour were understandable. | Low Vulnerability | 33.28 | 366.50 | 32.57 | 388.00 | 29.05 | 406.50 | 26.42 | 327.50* | 29.50 | 420.00 |
| | High Vulnerability | 27.72 | | 28.43 | | 31.95 | | 34.58 | | 31.50 | |
| There are good reasons to rationalise and tolerate *DT character's* behaviour. | Low Vulnerability | 30.18 | 440.50 | 27.47 | 359.00 | 25.70 | 306.00* | 25.37 | 296.00* | 27.43 | 358.00 |
| | High Vulnerability | 30.82 | | 33.53 | | 34.45 | | 35.63 | | 33.57 | |
| *Victim* should change his/her behaviour. | Low Vulnerability | 31.87 | 409.00 | 31.33 | 425.00 | 30.52 | 449.50 | 34.58 | 327.50* | 31.93 | 407.00 |
| | High Vulnerability | 29.13 | | 29.67 | | 30.48 | | 26.42 | | 29.07 | |
| *DT character* should change his/her behaviour. | Low Vulnerability | 33.77 | 352.00 | 33.22 | 368.50 | 32.00 | 405.00 | 31.92 | 407.50 | 35.05 | 313.50* |
| | High Vulnerability | 27.23 | | 27.78 | | 29.00 | | 29.08 | | 25.95 | |
| If given a chance, *Victim* can make an effort to change his/her behaviour. | Low Vulnerability | 30.40 | 447.00 | 32.77 | 382.00 | 30.23 | 442.00 | 33.05 | 373.50 | 31.08 | 432.50 |
| | High Vulnerability | 30.60 | | 28.23 | | 30.77 | | 27.95 | | 29.92 | |
| If given a chance, *DT character* can make an effort to change his/her behaviour. | Low Vulnerability | 29.82 | 429.50 | 29.40 | 417.00 | 28.82 | 399.50 | 29.25 | 412.50 | 28.63 | 394.00 |
| | High Vulnerability | 31.18 | | 31.60 | | 32.18 | | 31.75 | | 32.37 | |

*Note.* *p < 0.05. **p < 0.01.

**Open-Ended Questions for Vignettes**

In preparation for data analysis, all texts were run through standard spell-check programmes. Grammar, capitalisation, and sentence structure were not corrected.

**Word-Pattern Analysis.** Data obtained were not normally distributed. A Mann-Whitney $U$ test showed several significant differences (out of 79 output variables) between the high and low vulnerability group in linguistic features when describing the Dark Triad characters and the victims.

Due to the large number of statistical comparisons, the likelihood of reporting Type I error increased when a threshold of $p < 0.05$ was used. However, since this analysis was exploratory, several results worth highlighting are reported below.

When describing the Dark Triad characters in the vignettes, the low vulnerability group used significantly more quantifiers (e.g., *few*, *much*, *many*), $U = 389.00$, $p = 0.041$; future tense verbs (e.g., *may*, *will*, *soon*), $U = 376.00$, $p = 0.026$; words involving motion (e.g., *arrive*, *go*), $U = 384.00$, $p = 0.033$; and words involving religion (e.g., *church*, *altar*), $U = 436.00$, $p = 0.032$.

When describing the victims, the low vulnerability group used significantly more words ($U = 388.00$, $p = 0.045$) and function words in general (e.g., *it*, *no*, *very*), $U = 365.00$, $p = 0.021$. Specifically, they used more prepositions (e.g., *with*, *above*), $U = 335.50$, $p = 0.007$, and motion words ($U = 393.00$, $p = 0.05$). However, the low vulnerability group used significantly fewer words that are more than six letters ($U = 388.50$, $p = 0.03$). The high vulnerability group used more affiliation words (e.g., *friend*, *social*), $U = 395.50$, $p = 0.05$.

No other significant differences were found (all $p$s $> 0.05$).

**Text Analysis.** Tables 15 and 16 show the themes that emerged across all five vignettes based on the most frequently used descriptions employed by high and low vulnerability groups with regard to the Dark Triad characters and Victims, along with sample phrases to illustrate the written responses. Overall, both high and low vulnerability groups viewed the perpetrators negatively, employing words such as

"*irresponsible*", "*selfish*", "*manipulative*", whilst acknowledging that the victims were being victimised.

However, there seemed to be differences in the way both characters were described: the low vulnerability group were more derogatory, whereas the high vulnerability group were less harsh. Strong language, such as profanity, was common in the low vulnerability group, while the high vulnerability group appeared to have a tendency to explain and justify the behaviours of both characters through reasoning.

Table 15
*Themes that Emerged based on Occurrences of Words and Phrases Used to Describe Dark Triad Characters by High and Low Vulnerability Groups, with Example Phrases*

| Themes | Example sentences |
|---|---|
| *Low Vulnerability* | |
| Personality disorder | "*He is clearly a **sociopath***" |
| | "*He has the hallmarks of **narcissistic personality disorder***" |
| Will never change | "*He **will never change**, is parasitic and blames everyone else for whatever happens to him*" |
| | "*She's a controlling and bitter, narcissistic, with **no room for change***" |
| Derogatory descriptions | "*A total **douchebag***" |
| | "*Selfish **pig***" |
| | "*He is a narcissistic **asshole***" |
| | "*One word: **BITCH***" |
| Typical | "*He's also a **typical lecher** who would sweet-talk and use his position to lure women*" |
| | "*A **typical woman** who knows she's attractive and how to manipulate mem with it*" |
| *High Vulnerability* | |
| Opportunist/Go-getter | "***Does what he needs** to get where he wants to get to*" |
| | "***Ambitious***" |
| Successful/Effective | "*A man of **prestige and influence***" |
| | "*A **very successful** politician*" |
| Intelligent | "*She's **smart** to use her own advantage to benefit herself*" |
| | "*A **clever** manipulator*" |
| Problems stem from childhood | "*Must have had **unhappy childhood***" |
| | "*Probably, he has a **difficult family background***" |

Table 16
*Themes that Emerged Based on Occurrences of Words and Phrases Used to Describe Victims by High and Low Vulnerability Groups, with Example Phrases*

| Themes | Example sentences |
|---|---|
| *Low Vulnerability* | |
| Naïve | "***Naïve, easily convinced***" |
| | "***Naïve** (common!), **stupid, and emotionally weak***" |
| Weak/Does not take a stand | "*Her **soft and weak attitude** would hinder her wellbeing*" |
| | "*She appears as a **doormat**, no doubt*" |
| | "***Dug his own grave***" |
| | "*Someone who **should grow a pair***" |
| *High Vulnerability* | |
| People pleaser | "*She **feels responsible for everyone being happy***" |
| | "*A **patient** wife*" |
| | "***Avoids confrontation** or upsetting others*" |
| Blinded by love | "*Too **deep in love***" |
| | "***Is prepared to sacrifice everything** to get that love*" |
| | "*A really good girl **who cares a lot about her family and relationships***" |

## Discussion

The first aim of the current study was to determine the characteristics of individuals who are vulnerable to being socially manipulated.  It was hypothesised that low extraversion, high agreeableness, high conscientiousness, high neuroticism, and low openness are associated with this social vulnerability.  To address this hypothesis, the findings on the Vulnerability Scale and the Big Five Inventory are first discussed in detail.

The correlations between vulnerability scores and personality traits were largely consistent with the bullying literature.  High neuroticism and agreeableness were predictors of vulnerability to social manipulation.  Victims of bullying have shown higher neuroticism (Georgesen, Harris, Milich, & Young, 1999; Tani, Greenman, Schneider, & Fregoso, 2003), in line with the view that victims display higher levels of distress and negative emotions (Perry, Hodges, & Egan, 2001), which in turn reinforces further victimisation.  This may explain the phenomenon of repeat victimisation (Fattah, 1991).  Moreover, agreeable people are better able to manage their anger and are less likely to behave in a hostile way or retaliate (Gleason, Jensen-Campbell, & Richardson, 2004).  They are also more trusting of others and view others in ways that are more socially desirable (Jensen-Campbell &

Graziano, 2001). Although agreeableness is frequently associated with positive social interactions, high agreeableness may be one reason why people fall victim to individuals high in Dark Triad traits who can be socially and emotionally manipulative, as highly agreeable people are more forgiving and inclined to respond to aggression in a more temperate manner (Smart Richman & Leary, 2009).

Additionally, it appears that in the victimisation literature women have been identified as more vulnerable. Indeed, as seen from the mean differences between gender groups, females had significantly higher agreeableness scores than males. Tsang and Stanford (2006) found women who are more forgiving to have more empathy for abusers with dominant and controlling personalities, but another view is that women with more forgiving personalities may be more attracted to dominant men. Regardless of the causal direction, it is clear that apart from manipulator-related determinants, victim-related determinants such as personality variables also play a role in the perception of interpersonal manipulation.

Low extraversion scores amongst the high vulnerability group in the current study were not surprising, given that previous research has found victims of bullying to be less outgoing (Glasø et al., 2007; Mynard & Joseph, 1997). Unlike extraverts who are firm and forceful, introverts are usually more reserved, solitary, and less assertive, which are characteristics found among vulnerable individuals. This makes them more likely to be a target of victimisation (Coyne et al., 2000). Lack of assertiveness has indeed been associated with higher levels of peer victimisation in young girls (Keenan et al., 2010).

High conscientiousness has been known to be an antecedent of workplace bullying for the victim (Lind, Glasø, Pallesen, & Einarsen, 2009). For the present study, however, the high vulnerability group reported significantly lower conscientiousness scores, contradicting the hypothesis. According to Zapf and Einarsen (2003), highly conscientious individuals are often overachievers who are inflexible and literal-minded, and by possessing these qualities they are prone to provoke resentment from others, hence the basis for the negative relationship between vulnerability and conscientiousness found in the current study is less intuitively evident. Nonetheless, Bollmer, Harris, and Milich (2006) argued that people who are more conscientious tend to be more strong-minded and iron-willed, making them better able to fend off potential threats by perpetrators. Furthermore, lower conscientiousness is linked to greater anger, more negative affect in peer

conflicts, and less forgiveness. Those who are highly neurotic and less conscientious may struggle to regulate their behaviour when encountering conflict. They are also prone to having externalising and attention problems, which may elicit retaliation and encourage subsequent harassment.

It was also hypothesised that those from the high and low vulnerability group would have different attitudes towards the characters in the vignettes, in the way they respond to the Likert-type statements and open-ended responses. This hypothesis was largely supported. Upon inspection of the median scores, across all five vignettes, the less vulnerable were more assertive in their opinions; they were more affirmative (or negative) and more likely to select the extreme option (i.e., strongly agree or strongly disagree). In contrast, vulnerable people had a milder response style and their responses clustered around the neutral option.

Closer examination of the open-ended responses also revealed some differences between the high and low vulnerability group in terms of linguistic style and content. The current findings appear to be in line with the review by Tausczik and Pennebaker (2010). First, the more frequent use of motion words and quantifiers when describing the characters may denote that the less vulnerable elaborated on the descriptions of the characters. This, together with the relatively more brutal language, potentially suggests that the less vulnerable who are characterised by higher extraversion had no qualms about voicing their opinions. It has also been reported that extraverts produce fewer large words and less complex writings (Mehl, Gosling, & Pennebaker, 2006), which was indeed the case in the current study. The less vulnerable were also likely to use future tenses, which could be interpreted as them being more future- and goal-oriented, and more open to possibilities.

Besides, the high vulnerability group used more affiliative words or words that reference others (i.e., *friend*) when describing the victims in the vignettes, perhaps suggesting a sense of needing to belong within a social group (McClelland, 1961) or the desire to gain social approval from others with higher power (Muir, Joinson, Cotterill, & Dewdney, 2016). Another explanation for referencing others more frequently is that the more vulnerable group may have preferred to adopt a more compromising strategy to resolve interpersonal conflict, and hence were more likely to have a relational focus in their linguistic style, where they tended to be more concerned with what is best for the relationship as a whole, reducing the focus on self-interest (Lin, Lin, Huang, & Chen, 2016).

The high vulnerability group identified with the Dark Triad character in one of the vignettes (Vignette 2), contrary to the study's prediction.  As conscientiousness has been associated repeatedly with morality (Lapsley & Hill, 2009), such tendencies may suggest that vulnerable people possess blurred or uncertain personal and moral boundaries, which possibly led them to believe that the manipulator has some understandable reasons to be unpleasant.  On the other hand, Costa and McCrae (1992) contended that those low on conscientiousness may not necessarily lack moral principles, but they may be less exacting in applying them.  It is therefore likely that the exacting, deliberative conscientious nature that vulnerable individuals lack leads them to blindly give in to unethical or unpleasant behaviour (Wynn, 2014).

Researchers have attempted to explain why people identify with literary characters, which occurs frequently when one is reading a book or story.  As stated by Kaufman and Libby (2012), people are inclined to engage in a phenomenon termed "experience-taking", whereby they subconsciously take on the behaviours, internal thoughts, emotions, and feelings of fictional characters they relate to. Depending on the psychological state, some people are more or less prone to simulate the subjective experience of a character while reading a narrative.  This experience is said to be immersive; readers tend to forget themselves and identify with the character.  In the present study, vulnerable people perceived the Dark Triad character in Vignette 2 in socially desirable ways such as being confident and dominant.  The vignette exemplifies an interaction between Dave, who assumes the character of a charming corporate psychopath, and Scott, who appears to be a victim of Dave's manipulation strategies (refer to Appendix 5.1).  On one hand, the Dark Triad traits may represent an evolutionarily successful strategy (Jonason, Webster, et al., 2012), and these traits do indeed appear desirable at first glance.  On the other hand, it can be argued that vulnerable people aspire to such traits.  Experience-taking allows them to temporarily forget themselves and their own self-concept with which they may be dissatisfied.  The media literature adopts the term 'wishful identification' to describe a process where a person desires to become like or behave in ways similar to another person (Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005; von Feilitzen & Linné, 1975).  Identification with other individuals or groups are beneficial in several ways, for instance to form interpersonal connections or to enhance one's self esteem. Therefore, one possible explanation is that the appealing side of Dark Triad

individuals have a strong impact, and vulnerable people have a tendency to be drawn to those characteristics.

In the situation where Mike, a male victim encounters Sandra, a female Dark Triad character, as illustrated in Vignette 4 (refer to Appendix 5.1), more than one-third of participants in the second phase identified with the Dark Triad character. The vignette portrayed the male victim as behaving in a morally questionable way by having an extramarital affair with the Dark Triad character. It is generally agreed that infidelity involves a breach of trust and is unattractive (Mileham, 2007), but here people seem to be able to look past the unpleasant behaviours and identify with the Dark Triad individual, as they cannot justify the victim's marital unfaithfulness. Bartels (2008) argued that people are highly driven to abide by their moral beliefs in their judgements and choices, however these belief systems are flexible and complicated. Paradoxically, despite considering morality as rigid and objective, moral judgement processes are highly context-sensitive (Bartels, Bauman, Cushman, Pizarro, & McGraw, 2015). These findings reinforce the view that nuanced influences are involved in these judgements, and that people, particularly those who are more vulnerable, tend not to evaluate the roles of the aggressor and the victim in isolation.

### Limitations and Future Directions

The vignettes in this study were developed through adapting scenarios based on real-life situations, underpinned by theoretical concepts of perceptions of Dark Triad and vulnerability. A main limitation is the validation of scenarios in the vignettes. Although efforts have been made to validate the vignette content through a pilot-testing process, external validation to examine how the responses on hypothetical situations reflect people's actual behaviour when making similar decisions under real-world conditions would be valuable. Therefore, another avenue for future research may be to compare the results obtained using these vignettes to results from other objective measures in order to assess internal consistency.

One possible avenue for future studies is to employ developmental vignettes, in which scenarios are made interactive so that participants are able to influence how the vignettes unfold, through selecting potential courses of action from several options. In qualitative interviewing, such vignettes have been used to probe and explore participant responses, even if the stories take a different direction from the

way in which participants respond (e.g., Jenkins, Bloor, Fischer, Berney, & Neale, 2010). It might also be useful to present such scenarios differently, for instance using videos. This format is more realistic and may provide greater contextual information. Besides, it also relies less on literacy skills as compared to a written one. Certainly, there is the potential to design more complex scenarios using computer-based role-playing games or even immersive virtual environment technology in which participants can assume the roles of characters in a fictional setting. Optimistically, this allows researchers to afford more ecological validity without compromising experimental control. On the other hand, as this practice involves the immense complexity of non-verbal communication and the associated difficulties in data analysis that come with it, a trade-off exists. Therefore, it is expected that the relatively simple, conventional vignette methodologies, such as the one employed in the current study, will continue to have value in research.

Further, the analyses of the open-ended responses can be improved. One critical concern with human-coded text is the reliability, hence ideally two or more independent appraisers should be used in the classification procedure to establish consistency, or inter-coder reliability (Weber, 1990). Although the LIWC used in the present study is meant to provide a promising scalable way to identify linguistic styles of vulnerable individuals objectively, it also decontextualises words, so this automated means of analysis may miss sarcasm, irony, idioms, metaphors, and other aspects of language that are less than straightforward. Consider two example descriptions of the psychopathic female character, Sandra, in Vignette 4 of the current study. A participant from the low vulnerability group wrote: "*She is an absolute snake*", as opposed to a participant from the high vulnerability group: "*I wouldn't say she's a vulture*". If taken out of context, the words "*snake*" and "*vulture*" are just animal nouns, but it can be argued that the two statements mean very different things, if not entirely opposite.

More sophisticated text-mining analyses, as well as a mixed coding strategy, should be incorporated to provide a more comprehensive interpretation of the written responses. The caveat, though, is that mixing methodologies within a study can produce ambiguous results, making it difficult to decipher whether the findings generated are driven by one or the other coding method or by the theories underlying the research questions (Donohue, Liang, & Druckman, 2014). Future work can be invested in the pursuit of raising the bar with regard to this standard.

**Conclusion**

The Vulnerability Scale developed for the current project shows good alpha reliability and the items correlate as one would expect with the five personality dimensions. The scale may be useful in providing a better understanding of vulnerability and the psychological mechanisms underlying it. It may also help in identifying those who are susceptible to manipulation.

However, the results indicate that people who are vulnerable to victimisation should not be viewed as homogenous and undifferentiated. Variations in extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness all appear to have a role in vulnerability but not in any particular pattern. There are different ways in which personality factors may be associated with vulnerability.

Vulnerable individuals seem to be less certain when responding to Likert-type statements and possibly see grey areas in Dark Triad behaviours, whereas less vulnerable individuals perceive more readily that Dark Triad personalities are detrimental. It seems a paradox remains – whilst people complain about malevolent individuals, victims of such people may have a tendency to excuse them.

**Chapter 6:    Linguistic Traces of the Dark Triad**

*Language most shows a man: Speak, that I may see thee.*
        – Timber: or, Discoveries; Made upon Men and Matter, Ben Jonson (1892)


**Introduction**

For decades, the relationships between an individual's speech characteristics and transitory psychological states as well as stable personality traits have been of researchers' interest.  Speech, as a form of expressive behaviour, is said to reflect the most dominant and consistent personality traits of a person (Ramsay, 1968). Contemporary research has correlated word use with the Big Five personality dimensions.  For instance, neuroticism has been found to be positively associated with negative emotion words (Pennebaker & King, 1999; Yarkoni, 2010).  The linguistic style of extroverts has been shown to have reduced concreteness (Beukeboom, Tanis, & Vermeulen, 2012; Gill & Oberlander, 2002).  Patterns of language use seem to be a powerful marker of psychological characteristics.

An anecdotal case in point is the language used by the forty-fifth president of United States, Donald Trump, prior to his success in the 2016 Republican Party presidential primaries.  Among researchers and psychologists, few would dispute that Trump is an epitome of grandiosity, and his discourse mechanisms are effective for communicating what he wants to communicate to his target audience (e.g., Jonason, Webster, et al., 2012; Lakoff, 2016; McAdams, 2016).  His common use of crude and sometimes violent language may even appear to be an appeal, signalling to the public that unlike a typical public figure, he is ready to break rules in order to "*Make America Great Again*" (Reicher & Haslam, 2017).

Undoubtedly, the use of language and speech imagery play an important role in enabling leaders to articulate their visions, allowing their followers a psychological proximity in order to relate to a more desirable state of affairs (McGuire, Garavan, Cunningham, & Duffy, 2016).  In an attempt to empirically analyse the contribution of language to political influence, Ahmadian, Azarshahi, and Paulhus (2017) applied the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) computerised text analysis software to examine the announcement speeches of Republican candidates in 2015.  It was suggested that Trump's substantially more grandiose, less formal, and more dynamic linguistic style may have contributed to

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his victory in the Republican's presidential nomination. In this light, compared to other contenders, Trump's populist communication style, characterised by simple rhetoric, may have been more appealing to the voting populace (Thoemmes & Conway, 2007). This demonstrates that what a person says in day-to-day interactions, and more importantly how he or she says it due to the difficulty of fact-checking, may have a direct impact on others' person perception. This holds true even in political elections.

Researchers and clinicians have also been able to draw on identifiable connections between speech and cognitive functioning that can provide insights into offenders' perceptions and motivations. In sex offences, rapists have been found to use speech as an implement to control a victim through manipulating the interaction between offender and victim (Dale, Davies, & Wei, 1997). Holmstrom and Burgess (1979) obtained descriptions of rapists' speech from female victims and identified common themes, with some of the most salient ones being the use of threats and orders, making references to the victim's enjoyment, and calling the victim names. The soft-sell departure speaking style after the offence, which is intended to gain sympathy from the victim by apologising, was common as well. This point is relevant because, similar to rapists' talk, excellent manipulators use verbalisation as a strategy for exercising power over their targets of manipulation.

It is clear from the discussions in previous chapters that some individuals high in Dark Triad traits are able to achieve a degree of social or economic success, possibly due to a combination of prosocial aspects (e.g., charisma) and antisocial aspects (e.g., manipulative tendencies). The final study of the current project, presented in this chapter, is an idiographic, case-based approach to understanding such individuals. It is contended that much can be deduced about high-scorers on the Dark Triad by closely examining how they talk about themselves. This exploratory study provides a supplement or alternative to other ways of studying the Dark Triad. This chapter begins with insights of scholars whose works have been based on speech-based personality assessments.

**From Speech to Psychopathology**

The tradition of speech-based personality assessment dates back to the 1940s, when Sanford (1942b) conducted case studies to evaluate individual differences in verbal demeanour. Ever since, there have been many indications that point to the

existence, consistency, and significance of individual differences in the use of language (e.g., Furnham, 1990; Hirsh & Peterson, 2009). The idea that one's language betrays one's underlying thought process is already attested to by Freud (1901/1914) in his notion of 'parapraxes', where he suggested that people's unconscious urges can reveal themselves in apparent speech errors.

Personality and personal adjustments are seen as a key factor in speech style and verbal expressivity of emotion. By extension, it is reasonable to assume that psychiatric disorders have "vocal expressions", hence the analysis of speech patterns have been said to be useful not only for the diagnosis and evaluation of a particular disorder, but also helpful for measuring the efficacy of interventions or therapies (Chevrie-Muller, Sevestre, & Seguier, 1985). Stinchfield (1933) contended that speech disorders are often the first sign of mental illness, and patients' speech has always played a central part in the formation of clinical impressions. This led to Newman and Mather's (1938) attempt to use a set of criteria to systematically analyse the language of patients with affective disorders, who were classified into several subgroups, namely depressive syndromes, manic syndromes, and mixed-affective states. The recorded speech samples of these patients were analysed in terms of pitch, tempo, pauses, emphasis, and so on. It was reported that there were distinguishable speech characteristics within each subgroup. For example, those in the manic state tended to have a diversified pitch range and their articulation was vigorous, whereas depressed patients sounded "dead or listless" with frequent pauses and hesitations.

There have been attempts to use the word counting method to analyse speech patterns, primarily within psychotherapeutic settings, due to its ability to simplistically code individuals' narratives in relation to their personality traits and behaviours by counting the different types of words used. Derived from psychoanalytic principles, Weintraub and Aronson (1962), who were pioneers in text analysis method, designed a preliminary study to detect the manifestation of psychological defence mechanisms in speech. Using the coding method that was based on clinical cues, Weintraub and Aronson managed to isolate twelve categories of speech habits that appeared to be idiosyncratic, meaning that these categories were used significantly differently by different individuals. For example, patients with extreme impulsive behaviour overtly expressed their affect more, with their speech punctuated with significantly more "*I hate*", "*I'm miserable*", "*I feel terrible*"

and so on, showing their inability to contain feelings, which is, according to Weintraub and Aronson (1964), akin to speech of children who express their likes and dislikes with little restraint. This method of scoring, to some extent, was able to provide insight into how people reveal their views of themselves and others through the ways in which people use syntax and sentence structures, especially since speech is used almost exclusively in interpersonal interactions.

**Speech Characteristics of Violent Offenders**

Of studies on criminal behaviours such as rape and homicide, a considerable portion are composed of clinical case studies that seek to identify stable attributes within offenders. The analysis of offenders' statements and psychological case studies is not only critical for the purpose of investigation so that the court can make informed sentencing decisions, it also aids the understanding of the aetiology that led to the onset of offences in order to formulate treatment strategies.

For example, some research has placed focus on offenders' spoken attribution of blame or responsibility, drawing upon a framework developed from the analysis of oral statements. There is some contention that offenders' use of explanatory styles that defend, excuse, or justify (e.g., "*That is just who I am*", "*That's just the way the world works*") and attributions of a hostile nature (e.g., "*It is because everyone is against me*") can partially account for persistence in crime (Maruna, 2004). This form of justification or excuse-making to neutralise blame can be described as a form of cognitive distortion, although Maruna and Mann (2006) cautioned against the use of the term 'cognitive distortion' due to inconsistencies in definition for the umbrella term. Besides, it was pointed out that, outside of the criminal context, excuse-making is generally a normal and perhaps healthy behaviour, hence researchers should uphold a more unbiased position when evaluating these dimensions of "offender cognition" to avoid misattributions of labels such as 'offender cognitive distortion'.

Using the case study method, Lord, Davis, and Mason (2008) utilised stance-shift analysis to identify sections in sex offenders' oral statement transcripts where the offender changes the ways in which he or she ascribes responsibility. Stance-shifting occurs when a person changes his or her word usage patterns and can be detected using a computer-assisted coding system (Mason & Davis, 2007). Lord and colleagues found that rapists indeed push personal responsibility aside to justify their

aggression. When describing the initiation of violence, the rapists often substituted pronouns such as '*you*' or '*we*' for '*I*', as well as projected behaviour onto others citing '*they*' instead of naming specific persons, perhaps to depersonalise the self as a way to deflect culpability.

It has been mentioned above that rape offences often involve a wealth of verbalisation by the offender. Dale et al. (1997) found three overarching speech strategies, including the 'do as I say' approach, or less threatening strategies such as the 'foot in the door' approach and the 'door in the face' approach (Stahelski & Patch, 1993). In essence, the 'do as I say' discourse strategy often involves direct imperative threats or orders; the 'foot in the door' strategy is when the offender makes small demands which then increase in scale; and the 'door in the face' strategy is when the offender makes a large demand which is expected to be refused by the victim, followed by smaller requests which are more likely to be complied with due to moral obligations imposed onto the victim. In other words, the rejection-then-moderation procedure in the 'door in the face' strategy capitalises on an interpersonal dynamic of bargaining; the offender's concession can create an obligation for the victim (Cialdini et al., 1975).

It can therefore be expected that offenders or manipulators in other contexts may also change their speech in responses to victim reactions, signifying the importance of context in speech delivery. This again suggests that social manipulators do not operate in a vacuum – the responses of people around them play an important role in their exploitation strategies.

**Gross Characteristic of the Dark Triad Language**

Given that speech is a strategic implement commonly used by violent offenders to manipulate the offender–victim interaction, it would be worthwhile exploring the associations between Dark Triad and speech use within a non-clinical, non-forensic population. The current study sought to investigate this. Here, the language features of each Dark Triad trait are discussed.

**Narcissism.** In an early study by Raskin and Shaw (1988), it was revealed that individuals who were higher on the narcissism scale tended to use more first-person singular pronouns or I-talk (i.e., *I*, *me*, *my*, *mine*, *myself*) but fewer first-person plural pronouns (i.e., *we*, *us*, *our*, *ours*, *ourselves*). From both laypersons'

and researchers' point of view, this seems highly intuitive given that an excessive self-focus is indeed a valid marker of narcissism, and some studies have replicated this finding (e.g., Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007).

To examine gender differences, Fast and Funder (2010) correlated each participant's narcissism scores and self-reference word use in a life story interview, and found that men who self-referred more frequently had higher scores on the narcissistic authority and entitlement facets, indicating that they desire power and influence, or that they believe they deserve better treatment. Women who used more self-referencing words, on the other hand, had higher scores on narcissistic exhibitionism, implying that they enjoy being the centre of attention. Interestingly, for both genders, the use of self-reference words negatively correlated with the self-sufficiency facet on the narcissism scale, suggesting that narcissists have low sense of self-competence.

In spite of this, as it stands, the evidence showing the use of I-talk as a valid and reliable marker of narcissism is sparse and inconsistent. For instance, through the analyses of sound files recorded using a pocket-sized audio recorder known as Electronically Activated Recorder (Mehl, Pennebaker, Crow, Dabbs, & Price, 2001), Holtzman, Vazire, and Mehl (2010) did not find any reliable association between narcissism and I-talk use, but narcissism was positively associated with the use of swear words, angry words, and sexual language. This relationship was particularly strong for the exploitativeness/entitlement facet on the NPI, which is deemed the most maladaptive facet of narcissism.

Revisiting the early study by Raskin and Shaw (1988), Carey et al. (2015) conducted a higher-powered study but found little empirical support for the underlying relation between narcissism and the use of personal pronouns, contrary to strong lay belief as well as studies that have relied on this relation to study the manifestations of narcissism (e.g., Aktas, de Bodt, Bollaert, & Roll, 2016). In this context, Carey's team offered as an example the contention that the former United States president Barack Obama uses the word '*I*' excessively, providing evidence that he is narcissistic (Krauthammer, 2014). However, analyses of his actual use of first-person singular pronoun counts place him at the lowest on the list among recent American presidents such as George W. Bush, Ronald Reagan, and Bill Clinton (Pennebaker, 2011). Indeed, when analysing speeches delivered by both candidates of the 2008 United States presidential election Democrat Barack Obama and

Republican John McCain, it was found that there was a substantial use of inclusive language, notably the term '*we*' by Obama, whereas McCain used "*I*" more frequently to highlight actions that he will take if elected president (McGuire et al., 2016).

There are other ways narcissism can be revealed through language, if not through using pronouns such as '*I*' and '*me*'. According to Malkin (2015), some narcissists in fact talk about themselves less compared to non-narcissists, because it is argued that using '*I*' when giving opinions makes them sound subjective. Instead, they prefer making authoritative statements that make them sound as though what they are saying is an absolute truth. Craig and Amernic (2011) demonstrated how language can be used as a marker of destructive narcissism through selective analyses of letters written by corporate CEOs. For example, the use of powerful hyperboles "*tremendous opportunities for growth*" and "*enormous increase*" was said to signify a preoccupation with unlimited power and brilliance. However, because Craig and Amernic used the diagnostic criteria for narcissism set out by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition (DSM-IV; American Psychiatric Association, 2000) as the gold standard to diagnose narcissistic leadership, the findings of this study need to be interpreted with caution. This practice can potentially be viewed as a 'clinical at-a-distance diagnosis' that is against the 'Goldwater Rule', which prohibits diagnosticians from offering opinions on a person they have not personally evaluated (American Psychiatric Association, 2010). That said, one must be careful not to assume that researchers are making a psychodiagnosis simply because they are importing some of the terminology and theory from the clinic: they may be objectively accurate. Incidentally, it should be mentioned that the intention of using case studies in the current exploratory study is not to use language to diagnose or predict an individual's personality, but to offer an element of narrative to understanding such complex psychological constructs. As such, this approach of analysis is contended to be of practical importance and necessary for sound development of the psychology field.

**Machiavellianism.** Given the manipulative, self-interested nature of the Machiavellian, the link between the use of first-person singular pronouns and Machiavellianism has been tested. Ickes, Reidhead, and Patterson (1986) video-recorded participants engaging in an unstructured dyadic interaction, and then coded

the personal pronoun usage from the participants' conversations. Their data showed that Machiavellianism was positively correlated with the use of self-focused conversation (i.e., first-person singular and plural pronouns), but was negatively correlated with the use of other-focused conversation (i.e., the use of second- and third-person singular pronouns).

Further, in another study by Muir et al. (2016) that was based on the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT; Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991), people exhibiting Machiavellian tendencies were shown to adjust their linguistic style during social interactions through non-conscious verbal mimicry to ease their self-serving, socially exploitative interpersonal style. People with high Machiavellianism achieved this through changing their use of function words (e.g., '*he*', '*she*', '*on*', '*its*') in order to resemble more like those of their conversational partner, enabling them to exert social influence for self-gain. Given that verbal mimicry has positive social consequences, especially for the mimicker (Jacob, Guéguen, Martin, & Boulbry, 2011; van Baaren, Holland, Steenaert, & van Knippenberg, 2003), this strategic implementation closely resembles the operations of feigned empathy by those high in Machiavellianism.

**Psychopathy.** The language of psychopaths has been a focus of researchers since the introduction of the concept of psychopathy, and the majority has focused on the clinical and forensic population (for a review, see Brites, 2006). In general, irregular linguistic processing has been consistently linked to psychopathy. Cleckley (1976) highlighted the presence of a "hollow" language in psychopaths' pattern of language, which he described as superficial glibness. An early review by Rieber and Vetter (1994) stated that people diagnosed with psychopathy invariably speak colourfully and persuasively about themselves and their past, but minimally about their future. It was also argued that, based on clinicians' encounters, the speech contents of a person with psychopathy tend not to have any discernible associations with actual facts.

Some researchers argued that those with antisocial tendencies create poor stories, describing various events with only a few words, concentrating on concrete occurrences without explicitly expressing emotions (Keltikangas-Järvinen, 1982). In several other studies, penitentiary inmates with psychopathy were reported to use a lot of jargon and poorly integrated phrases; their statements were contradictory and

disjointed, where they often went off track and changed topics (Brinkley, Newman, Harpur, & Johnson, 1999; Williamson, 1991).

Using the Weintraub and Aronson (1962) scoring technique, Eichler (1965) observed that the speech habits of sociopathic inmates in a correctional facility compared to normal controls contained significantly more negation (i.e., negative statements, e.g., '*no*', '*not*', '*never*', '*nothing*'), qualification (i.e., words or phrases that indicate uncertainty or vagueness, e.g., '*suppose*', '*more or less*', '*what one might call*'), retraction (i.e., words or phrases that detract the statement that has immediately preceded them, e.g., '*John is an honest person. Of course he has been involved in some shady deals!*'), and evaluation (i.e., value judgements, e.g., '*Your idea won't work*'). Supporting this finding, a more recent psycholinguistic study by Gawda (2010) found that the narrative discourse of inmates diagnosed with Antisocial Personality Disorder were found to contain more repetitions, pauses, and negations.

Sentence completion tests were administered to inmates of a high-security prison in a study in Germany by Endres (2004). Verbal responses by inmates showed positive correlations between psychopathy scores and several linguistic categories, including concerns with power and domination, resistance against powerful others and being dominated by others, the use of vulgar and obscene language, and the expression of negative emotions without reason or context.

Porter and Woodworth (2007) examined the manner in which people with psychopathy described their homicides and noticed that not only were they more likely to execute predatory, instrumental murders, they were also more prone to omit major details of their crime in order to exaggerate the spontaneity of their homicides (spontaneous offenses are typically accompanied by lighter sentence). These highly psychopathic individuals were also found to be good at manipulating their words and actions to impress or deceive parole decision makers.

When psychopathic murderers were asked to describe their crime in detail in a study using computerised text analysis (Hancock, Woodworth, & Porter, 2013), they were more likely than their non-psychopathic counterparts to include subordinating conjunctives (i.e., '*because*', '*since*', '*as*', '*so that*', framing their language in an explanatory and causal way. There was also a tendency for psychopaths to use twice as many words relating to what Maslow (1943) referred to as basic physiological and self-preservation needs, including eating, drinking, or

money, compared to non-psychopaths who were more inclined to include language related to social needs such as family, religion, or spirituality. In addition, psychopaths' narratives comprised more disfluencies such as '*ums*' and '*uhs*', fewer emotionally intense words, and more past tenses than present tense verbs, suggesting a great degree of psychological and emotional detachment from the violent incidents they committed. Similar findings were reported in a recent study where Le, Woodworth, Gillman, Hutton, and Hare (2017) analysed speech produced during the Psychopathy Checklist–Revised (PCL-R; Hare, 2003) clinical assessment.

**Dark Triad.** Only a couple of studies on language use that covered all three Dark Triad traits were identified. Sumner, Byers, Boochever, and Park (2012) collected self-report Dark Triad data from Twitter users and analysed their language use using the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) software. It was reported that there was a positive relationship between narcissism and words associated with sex. People high in Machiavellianism had an increased use of swear words and words related to anger and negative emotions, but were less likely to use the word '*we*'. Finally, people with high psychopathy had an increased level of swearing and anger, and the frequencies of words about death and negative emotions were higher. However, one key finding worth mentioning is that there was not a case where all three Dark Triad traits shared statistically significant results, which again, consistent with discussions in the previous chapters, suggest that these traits manifest differently and are not equivalent.

Preoţiuc-Pietro, Carpenter, Giorgi, and Ungar (2016) also studied the extent to which the Dark Triad is related to Twitter behaviour using the LIWC software. It was reported that narcissism was significantly linked to the use of positive (e.g., '*favourite*', '*beautiful*') and banal (e.g., '*breakfast*', '*place*', '*things*') words, as well as facile language which includes discussions of reality television competitions, weekend plans, and cheerfulness. The posts from psychopaths include crude, angry, and morbid content (e.g., '*killed*', '*injuries*', '*furious*'), featuring high levels of negative emotionality. Machiavellianism showed fewer relationships, but was associated with words involving practicality like '*affordable*', '*realistic*', '*responsible*', and '*needs*'. Participants high in Machiavellianism also focused on expressing gratitude, as shown by the frequent use of '*thanks*', which was interpreted by Preoţiuc-Pietro and colleagues as a Machiavellian strategy to gain social capital.

On social media platforms such as Twitter, people high in Machiavellianism may invest in the use of words in order to get recognised or remembered by the public.

In summary, people high in Dark Triad traits seem to adopt a unique language pattern compared to those on the low spectrum. However, it does not appear that there is a consistent pattern across the three traits.

**Linguistic Analysis Methods**

Many share the assumption that language assessment is relevant to the detection and assessment of personality and psychopathology. Nonetheless, the various strategies of studying features of language and word use as reviewed in the sections above can be categorised into three broad methodologies (Chung & Pennebaker, 2011): judge-based thematic analysis, word pattern analysis, and word count strategy.

*Judge-based thematic analysis* is essentially a qualitative approach involving an expert or a group of judges who identify the presence of major themes in text samples based on developed coding schemes (Smith, 1992). Thematic content analyses have been widely used in the study of causal attributions in depressive individuals (Peterson, Bettes, & Seligman, 1985) and in narrative accounts (McAdams, Reynolds, Lewis, Patten, & Bowman, 2001).

Instead of using a 'top-down' design to explore text based on pre-defined psychological content dimensions or categories, the *word pattern analysis* mathematically detects how words co-vary across large samples of text using a 'bottom-up' design, usually with a computerised system (Graesser, McNamara, Louwerse, & Cai, 2004; Popping, 2000). This type of analysis detects similarities in groups of texts statistically, hence a large set of text data is required to identify reliable word patterns. Word pattern analysis has been used to mathematically extract the underlying themes of al-Qaeda statements and interviews by terrorist groups (Pennebaker & Chung, 2008).

The current research trend using *word count strategy*, as its name suggests, usually focuses on simplistic word count, such as standard grammatical units (e.g., pronouns, verbs, prepositions) or psychologically derived linguistic categories (e.g., emotion words, social words), and these rely on a set of dictionaries with previously categorised terms. This method has been contended to be useful for both the analysis of linguistic content (i.e., what is being said) and linguistic style (i.e., how it

is being said), because it is based on the idea that words convey psychological information beyond their literal meaning. There is an increasing number of applications of word count strategies in personality assessments (e.g., Mehl et al., 2006; Pennebaker & King, 1999) and statement analysis (Adams, 2004). Researchers make use of computerised text-analysis programmes to quantify psychological processes, but the limitations of this analysis method have already been highlighted several times in this thesis; existing programmes fail to detect linguistic nuances and word representations that are contextually embedded.

From what can be gathered, careful analyses of data collected from early observations and recent large-scale quantitative research seem to show subtle anomalies in narcissistic, Machiavellian, and psychopathic language, and that high-scorers of the Dark Triad exhibit distinct speech patterns compared to their low-scoring counterparts. That speech patterns or the words people use are meaningful markers of social and personality processes is a well-accepted notion. Analysing language patterns can lead to insights that would otherwise remain hidden. However, while these patterns appear to be consistent with current theories about the antagonistic behaviours of *each* trait, there is not one underlying pattern that all three traits share.

As evident in previous chapters, interpersonal judgements occur naturally and immediately; accurate assessment of others' traits (particularly the unpleasant ones) is evolutionarily adaptive for social survival (Haselton & Funder, 2006). It is thus vital for people to make rapid and accurate judgements of others through their spoken language. This suggests that linguistic aspects play a major role as indicators of personality traits, even when other information or records are not available.

In an employment context, for instance, recruiters assess competencies and make crucial selection decisions largely based on interviews, by observing the ways in which people speak. In addition, most clinicians assume that meaningful inferences can be made about a patient's comportment through the analysis of his or her verbal behaviour. For example, assessment of psychopathy with the Psychopathy Checklist–Revised (PCL-R; Hare, 2003) relies heavily on clinical interviews whereby verbal presentation is central. It is thus more ecologically sound to move away from quantitative analysis methods and explore strategies in which speech patterns can be understood in the absence of an automated word analysis tools.

**Current Study and Hypothesis**

The aim of the current study was to draw on a sample of people at the extreme high end of the Dark Triad spectrum and explore each trait from participants' narrative account, using the case study method. By using a life story interview, it is possible to glean much information about their personality from the contents of participants' past and current life situation.

As can be seen in the literature review above, much present-day work on personality and language appears to be via the traditional experimental or questionnaire approach. The advantage of using these methods that typically employ large samples is breadth, whereas for case studies, it is one of depth. Whilst acknowledging that most contemporary research in Dark Triad personality tend towards a nomothetic approach, how a trait is expressed is different from person to person. The goal of purposively targeting extreme individuals for the case study method in the current study is not to enable generalisations, but rather to provide an intensive look at particular information-rich cases which can be used to inform practice (Patton, 2002).

Of course, case studies are also able to foreground the personality configuration of the person. It is believed that adopting an idiographic approach can offer a more holistic picture of the discourse of individuals high in Dark Triad traits, as it enables a more complex understanding of how such individuals use language to operate in concert with others, and at the same time helps researchers better understand some of the reasons why some people tolerate these people high on the Dark Triad measures, even when their speech (and actions) may seemingly demonstrate a profound lack of empathy. More importantly, this study sought to provide insights to help researchers comprehend the aetiology and the way in which Dark Triad traits develop.

The exploratory nature of the present study involved an application of a text analysis scheme in order to qualitatively analyse language use of individuals high in Dark Triad constructs. Both content and linguistic style were considered. It was postulated that the speech patterns of those high in Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism, as assessed using non-clinical measures, would be consistent with the theoretical conceptions associated with each Dark Triad trait. Specifically, the content and style in the narratives of individuals high in Machiavellianism were

expected to reveal the use of interpersonal tactics, a cynical view of human nature, and a lack of conventional morality. Individuals high in psychopathy were expected to have narratives showing dispositions of interpersonal manipulation, callous and unemotional affect, erratic lifestyle, and criminal tendencies. Individuals high in narcissism were expected to show tendencies of high authority, self-sufficiency, superiority, exhibitionism, vanity, and entitlement in their narratives. Low agreeableness and callousness were expected to be expressed to some degree in each individual.

## Method

### Participants

Four participants, two males and two females aged 21 to 33 who spoke English as their first language participated in this interview study. Sampling was purposive, in which interviewees were a subgroup of participants selected from a larger sample who, as described in Chapter 3, completed the Dark Triad measures ($N = 159$) in the Initial Phase.

The type of case study conducted here is an extreme or anomaly cases approach, hence all participants were selected from the higher end of each Dark Triad trait scale. Of the four participants, one of them scored at least one standard deviation above the mean in Machiavellianism ($M = 56.40$, $SD = 7.92$), two scored at least two standard deviations above the mean on psychopathy ($M = 145.21$, $SD = 23.43$), and two scored at least two standard deviations above the mean in narcissism ($M = 13.65$, $SD = 6.72$). None of the participants were high in all three Dark Triad traits. The current standpoint is that each Dark Triad trait exists on a continuum, hence it should be emphasised that the difference between high- and low-scorers is relative; the data are merely a range of scores collected from a non-clinical sample. Each participant received a £20 high street voucher as compensation for their time and effort.

Table 17 contains the Dark Triad $z$-scores of each participant, calculated based on means and standard deviations of the current study cohort as well as the general population. Population norms are based on previous studies with large sample sizes, as already discussed in Chapter 3 (see p. 62). The significance of the $z$-scores is as follows: $|z| < 1$ indicates that the participant's score is considered to be within the population norm value; $1 < |z| < 2$ indicates that the participant's score is

considered to be marginally different from the population norm value; and $|z| > 2$ indicates that the participant's score is considered to be significantly different from the population norm value.

Table 17
*Dark Triad z-scores of Each Interviewee, calculated based on Means and Standard Deviations of the Current Study Cohort and the General Population*

| | MACH-IV | | SRP 4 | | NPI-40 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Study Cohort | General Population | Study Cohort | General Population | Study Cohort | General Population |
| Mean | 56.40 | 66.92 | 145.21 | 134.23 | 13.65 | 13.25 |
| (SD) | (7.92) | (13.84) | (23.43) | (25.01) | (6.72) | (8.47) |
| | | | | | | |
| *z*-scores | | | | | | |
| Participant 1 | 0.71 | −0.36 | 2.62 | 2.99 | −0.69 | −0.50 |
| Participant 2 | 1.72 | 0.22 | −0.03 | 0.47 | −1.73 | −1.33 |
| Participant 3 | −0.43 | −1.01 | 1.44 | 1.87 | 2.43 | 1.98 |
| Participant 4 | 0.08 | −0.72 | 2.79 | 3.15 | 1.99 | 1.62 |

## Materials

**Life Story Interview Schedule.** An adapted version of McAdams's (1995) Life Story Interview schedule (Appendix 6.1) was used to optimise participants' self-narrative. The schedule is in chronological order and participants were asked to think about their lives as "chapters", focusing on a few pivotal events that stand out as especially memorable or important in their lives. Key events include a 'high point' or the greatest moment in the story, a 'low point' or the worst moment in the story, a 'turning point' or a moment when significant change takes place, as well as a series of other notable happenings in their life course. For each key chapter, they were asked to mention the characters involved, describe their own thoughts and feelings during the occurrences of those key moments, and how those moments ultimately resolved.

This is considered a useful method given that narration can be used as a method for researchers to comprehend the narrators' mental schemas and their cognitive representation of reality (Bruner, 1991). As idiographic approaches are meant to focus on the understanding of the person, a life story interview provides a unique perspective of the individual (Atkinson, 2002).

As life history interviews involve asking people to talk about their stories, it is acknowledged that this highly contextualised and highly personalised approach to gathering data may give rise to several ethical issues, particularly if participants

reveal sensitive personal information. The procedure section below outlines the steps taken to address these ethical concerns.

**Procedure**

All four participants who completed the Dark Triad measures in the Initial Phase were invited via e-mail to take part in the current study. A face-to-face semi-structured interview was conducted individually with each participant in a laboratory in Edinburgh Napier University. Prior to each interview, each participant was provided with a written information sheet detailing the nature of the interview (Appendix 6). Participants were given assurance about ethical principles, such as maintaining anonymity and confidentiality, as well as the right to withdraw from the study. Participants were also informed that responding to a question is voluntary, and that they were in no obligation to answer every interview question, especially if there were questions they were unsure of or felt uncomfortable answering.

Following this, informed consent was obtained. All participants were interviewed once, and although the interviews varied in length according to the verbosity of the interviewee, they lasted between 40 minutes and an hour. At the end of the interviews, participants were debriefed about the study (Appendix 6.2)

The interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of the participants and were thereafter transcribed using the data preparation guideline by McLellan, MacQueen, and Neidig (2003). Transcription was done verbatim, including any nonverbal sounds (e.g., laughter, sighs, coughs). The transcripts were not "cleaned up", hence retaining offensive language, slang, grammatical errors, brief pauses (ellipses were used when a statement is unfinished, tailing off, or fragmented), word or phrase repetitions, enunciated reductions (e.g., *gotta*, *kinda*, *couldna*), and filler words (e.g., *hm*, *huh*, *uh*). Portions where participants' words or sentences are inaudible or difficult to decipher were identified by [unintelligible]. Lengthy pauses (i.e., more than five seconds) or segments of "dead air" when no one was speaking were also noted as [pause]. Sensitive information such as names were replaced with pseudonyms and identifying details were changed.

It should be noted there is not one universal transcription format that is adequate for all types of data theoretical frameworks, but the level of transcription described above was adhered because it complemented the level of the analysis in the current study.

**Analytic Strategy**

The interview transcripts were analysed by means of qualitative text analysis. The approach was fundamentally theoretical or *a priori*, as it is impossible to interpret any data without imposing some theoretical assumptions about the behavioural outcomes of each Dark Triad trait, whether doing this explicitly or implicitly.  Within the scope of text analysis, a strictly *a priori* approach uses a human- or computer-coding technique, applying predefined dictionary-based codes to words in a text or speech sample, similar to the linguistic analysis programmes used in contemporary research that focuses on word use rather than language per se (for a review, see Pennebaker, Mehl, & Niederhoffer, 2003).  Nevertheless, it is recognised that the content of speech cannot necessarily be understood, let alone scored, out of context.  Language, by definition, is contextual.  Therefore, the qualitative analysis taken in the current study goes beyond merely counting words.

Based on the theoretical conception of each Dark Triad trait, the ways in which features of each trait unfold in the interview transcripts are the main focus. The goal of this directed approach was primarily to validate or extend conceptually the theoretical framework of the Dark Triad.  Each interview audio-recording was listened to multiple times and the transcripts were read and re-read.  Following this, parts of the interview transcripts were coded for correspondence with or exemplification of the identified Dark Triad feature, and theory guided the discussions of findings.

It can also be observed from the literature review above that various frameworks for linguistic analysis are available, and not all can be applied to the study of each Dark Triad trait.  Given the exploratory nature of the current study, a more generic inductive approach was also adopted, so to allow findings to emerge from significant patterns inherent in the speech samples under investigation, in the absence of the restraints imposed by specific methodologies (Thomas, 2006).  In practice, both inductive and deductive analysis are common and perhaps essential for development and understanding of psychological constructs.

It is acknowledged that at the heart of many qualitative data analysis methods is the task of identifying themes, but as the current study deals with life stories, one cannot expect that there would be commonalities across individuals.  As mentioned,

idiographic methods should focus on the person. Therefore, each life story is analysed as a whole, and a central theme throughout each life story is discerned.

## Findings

Including large portions of the interviews in this thesis is not possible and can be tedious for the reader. The findings presented below are deemed to be most important for the understanding of the Dark Triad characteristics. Based on multiple close readings of the interview transcripts (Appendix 6.3), the contents of interviewees' verbalisation seemed to reflect behaviours consistent with their respective Dark Triad traits.

**Case Example 1**

The following presents excerpts from the interview with a 21-year-old female participant who had a high psychopathy score relative to the rest of the sample she was drawn from (209; $M = 145.21$, $SD = 23.43$, range $91 - 213$). She had an average score in Machiavellianism (62; $M = 56.40$, $SD = 7.92$, range $40 - 77$) but scored relatively low in narcissism (9; $M = 13.65$, $SD = 6.72$, range $2 - 33$). The link between psychopathy and criminal tendencies was evident even at the beginning of the interview. After having the nature of the interview explained and having been asked to talk about her peak experience, Interviewee 1 immediately responded with a question:

*OK. I do have question now. Can I talk about illicit substances?*

Her readiness to jump right into a conversation without social inhibitions was noticeable. Her description of the highest point in her life involved an altered state of consciousness, induced by drugs. She described her readiness to experiment with ketamine recreationally at a festival:

*Ehm... I was at a festival, I—I was with a bunch of my friends, and we were experimenting with some drugs [laugh]. We tried...uh I can't really remember the cocktail, but we had some trips involved, ehm…*

She was willing to reveal personal sensitive information even from the start of the interview. When asked about an important adolescent scene, she discussed

having sex below the age of consent just to "*get it out of the way*" (it was not clear whether her sexual partner was of legal age, but the act was consensual).  She described it casually and said the experience is "*made for good stories*".  It seems interesting how losing her virginity is considered a key chapter in her life.  This appears to be consistent with Hancock et al.'s (2013) view that people high in psychopathy tend to make frequent references to fundamental physiological needs.

The role of negative childhood experiences, particularly sexual abuse, was observed when Interviewee 1 was asked to describe her low point or nadir experience.  She spoke of the abuse, being ill-treated by her grandfather, matter-of-factly:

> *I guess the most relevant that's had the biggest impact on my life, erm, I was around… 10, 10 to 12 years old, and I had some pretty bad experiences with my granddad. He wasn't a particularly nice guy, he was a… paedophile?*

When asked to talk about her childhood, it was interesting that Interviewee 1 did not make any references to the abuse mentioned earlier.  Instead, the response was short and there were moments of long pauses.  The word '*sin*' was heard instead of '*scene*', followed by "*oh well*" and a brief laugh.

> *Interviewee 1    :    [pause] Uh I don't really remember a lot of my childhood. Ehm… what did you say it was called?*
>
> *Interviewer       :    Childhood scene.*
>
> *Interviewee 1    :    Childhood scene? I heard, sin, oh well [laugh]… [pause] I don't really have any more childhood memories.*

There were times when Interviewee 1 made contradictory and inconsistent statements.  There was a lack of focus when presenting the content of her narrative.  Although not uncommon in "normal" speech, Interviewee 1 seemed to demonstrate this pattern of speech in a few incidences:

> *I don't really think my morals have changed, like I still think right is right and wrong is wrong. Erm, obviously, my religious beliefs changed from not being religious, to being religious, to not being religious again [laugh]. And obviously politics, it's becoming a bit more important. But overall… I don't know, I guess my morals have kinda changed. Like, when you're a kid you don't really know what morals are, you*

*don't really care, but as I've—I've gotten older, I've got a more defined sense of right and wrong. Ehm [pause] yeah. It's more defined.*

It could be inferred from the interview that her lifestyle is generally stressful and erratic. She grew up with a single mother, who was also sexually abused by the grandfather. At various points during the interview she touched upon their poor relationship. Towards the end of the interview, she said has never met her father, but she talked about a neighbour who she considers a father figure. However, the description of this neighbour as a "father figure" was vague:

*He was, he was a really good impact on my life, he was just always so, just so happy, and I've always got like little memories, and every time I walked up the path I always just remember, oh that time we did this, that time we did that, and, yeah, it's just really nice.*

In general, the description of her life story was rather fragmented, and there was little structural and thematic coherence in the narrative. She said, "*you said at the start, imagine your life is a book, and having different chapters*". It appears that she took this rather literally, and described different parts of her life as different sections.

## Case Example 2

Interviewee 2 was a 33-year-old female who, relative to the rest of the sample she was drawn from, scored higher on Machiavellianism (70; $M = 56.40$, $SD = 7.92$, range $40 - 77$), average on psychopathy (146; $M = 145.21$, $SD = 23.43$, range $91 - 213$), but low on narcissism (2; $M = 13.65$, $SD = 6.72$, range $2 - 33$). The main theme that emerged from Interviewee 2's narrative was adversities. Her mother had an accident when she was fifteen and has had disability ever since. During the interviewee's childhood and teen-aged years, she was a victim of school bullies:

*Teenage years. Uhm, it has gonna be high school, isn't it? [laugh] Yeah, erm [pause] high school, I hated. I had—I loved high school, I've always loved learning, and I love the structure in it. But, high school was one of these areas where I just didn't fit in at all. Erm, so I permanently had to hide from bullies and so, high school's a time where I just remembered that you're only there for a few years. That was all I focused on. Just to get out. Get to uni or whatever. Erm I was unfortunate that I got away from the bullies in primary school, just to find new ones in high school [laugh].*

There was an indication that her expressions contained some degree of cynicism, shown when she was asked to describe a story that she has watched or read. She expressed a sense of alienness towards Disney films, although such fantasy movies are not meant to represent reality:

> *I mean, I've always thought Disney films were strange. It's not that I don't like them I just find them strange. You know, the princess gets her prince and it's... erm, I don't know. When you grow up in areas like I did, poor areas, they're all single parent families, where the men, you know, seem to sleep around, leave kids everywhere and bugger off. They don't stay, so, Disney films are so removed from reality to me, it's ridiculous.*

Contrary to the idea that Machiavellians are cold-minded decision makers, there was no particular instance where Interviewee 2 appeared emotionally detached from the situations she was describing. It was not evident in her narrative that she lacked empathy or was interpersonally exploitative. When asked to express her political or social views, she appeared to be more accepting of questionable actions, but was able to articulate her arguments, demonstrating rational deliberation:

> *I worked in Lidl up the road, and erm, we were supposed to stop all shoplifters. But I remember a woman stealing baby food, uh she was trying to hide it in a buggy, and I'm like, I'm not stopping her. Erm, stealing is wrong, but that isn't wrong to me. Stealing baby food isn't wrong, if she had to steal, I don't know why, maybe she'd spent her money on drugs so maybe it was wrong, but how do you stop someone stealing baby food?*

When discussing morals within marriage and infidelity, Interviewee 2 also displayed a relativism inclination. This is in line with the theoretical conception that people high in Machiavellianism are more likely to disavow the tendency to formulate absolute moral values (Leary, Knight, & Barnes, 1986).

> *I don't think anything in life is black and white. You see things like, erm, you shouldn't cheat on your partner, it's wrong. Is it? Why? There's so many grey lines everywhere. Erm, if you break a personal agreement with someone, if you actually specifically say to someone "I will not sleep with anyone else", then you should stick to it. That is your moral grounds. If you said "I will never steal anything", you have to respect your own boundary, and w–who you've said that to. Erm, the laws that the government make, we trust these people to make these lines in the sand, and they*

*decide where they fall. Erm, like legalising drugs, they've decided for the greater good of everybody, but I don't necessarily think they're right.*

*So many people join the army or work on oil rigs and come back to find that their wives have cheated on them. But if they had an agreement, they wouldn't have cheated. It would have been agreed upon, if the people involved could say "right, I'm gonna be away for six months of the year. If you wish to go out and have fun at that time you can." And they risk losing their wife, but they risk losing them anyway, if you're gonna lose someone you're gonna l—lose them.*

**Case Example 3**

Interviewee 3 was a 29-year old male who was pursuing his doctoral degree in the field of life sciences. He had a high narcissism score relative to the rest of the sample he was drawn from (30; $M = 13.65$, $SD = 6.72$, range $2 – 33$), in which he had attained the maximum score for the authority, exhibitionism, and entitlement subscales. He had relatively elevated psychopathy scores (181; $M = 145.21$, $SD = 23.43$, range $91 – 213$) but his Machiavellianism scores were average (53; $M = 56.40$, $SD = 7.92$, range $40 – 77$). From his narrative, it was known that he started seeing a therapist a few years ago because of writer's block. In the interview he made references to his therapist four times, all unprompted.

The overall tone with Interviewee 3 was optimistic and positive. Compared to the other interviewees, Interviewer 3 was strikingly more verbose, and perhaps literal. In fact, in a few instances he literally substituted expletives with the word "*expletive*". The following excerpts are taken from his initial response to questions about his earliest memory and an important childhood scene. At various points he restated the interview question before responding. His overall narrative focused on precision:

*OK… This is event number four, right? OK. Event number 4 was actually the first thing I had in mind when you were going through the whole introduction.*

*Umm so a memory that I had of childhood where it could be positive or negative, potentially after six years old, before 12 years old, right?*

He had a more extensive and specialised vocabulary, marked by uses of jargons such as "*my dad's hyperemotional, my mom's hypo-emotional*" when describing his parents' reaction to his undergraduate achievements. There were also

uses of hyperboles, exaggerating his points.  This is in line with Brennan and Conroy's (2013) study that found the use of hyperbole to be the most common indicator for narcissistic-speak amongst CEOs:

> *And I got rejected by almost every single school, and that was depressing and then the schools that did accept me they were like "oh you have to pay 300,000 pounds or whatever for you to do your three-year or four-year PhD".*

> *… it's like you know if you're going after this guy and you end up breaking 500 men's hearts, yes that's selfish, but like if you're going after this guy and it's helping your heart and feeding your soul and making your mind be—be—be—be—be—be stimulated every day, like why not, you know?*

Interviewee 3 made a lot of references to people around him, and was the only person among these case examples who referred to the people he was talking about using their actual names (names have been changed in the transcripts to preserve anonymity).  In the following example, it can be seen that he was upfront with using manipulative tactics to achieve his goals in high school:

> *I remember joining the school and asking almost every senior prefect, like, how is it to become a prefect? And then next, talking to Sean which I never liked my entire school life, asking him how it's like to be a head prefect and what does it take? So and then I remember like applying to be prefect and they wanted a CV from every single student who was applying and I catered it around how I talked to Sean, how I talked to Mr Mark which was another, which was—which is uhh a Prefectorial Board teacher and having all of this input and kinda like you know, I kinda manipulated them into getting what I wanted, so I knew exactly what I needed to write my CV as, and I made whatever that I could stand out and basically blow everyone else out of the water because I knew who was my immediate competition. At that point was Cindy. So yeah because Cindy was a head prefect before. That was the closest person or Carl. So I was like alright, so I remembered also telling Carl, "oh do you really want to be a prefect again?" And somehow, convincing him out of becoming a prefect because he was the closest person to becoming—*

Overall, Interviewee 3 had a tendency to describe things in a lot of detail and clarity, but with very little speech disfluencies (i.e., *um*, *ah*) or pauses.  Even when talking about an important childhood scene that had occurred decades ago in this rather impromptu conversation, he was able to articulate the event with few filler words.  He could articulate timelines, the song titles he sung, the colours of his toys.

In his discourse, there was a focus on self-esteem and accomplishments, but that is not to say they were necessarily a form of pathological grandiosity:

> *Yes, because I read a lot when I was growing up. Like I knew about the digestive system by the time I was six or seven, like, my science teachers had hard times trying to teach me because I probably read a little more than them. So but essentially it set me up to more things and my first public speaking was like when I was standard 4, that was, ten years old and it was the same concept. The difference is that I did singing, two years in a row, Pocahontas's Colours of the Wind when I was nine and Part of Your World when I was eight, but when I was ten I decided, I'm gonna stop this singing, I'm still going to love singing, but let's try something else and do public speaking. And the reason why I think that memory is so important to me is because now the thing that I think I do best is public speaking. And that was my first time public speaking and it was set up because of the two years of singing in public and I remember the theme was, my favourite toy, and my favourite toy at that point were two dolls. One was the pink power ranger and the other was the yellow power ranger that my brother and my mother shared to buy me at that point. It was a girl's toy, it was a doll and I carried it in my mother's rattan multi-coloured bag that I still have at home. I brought it on stage I brought the two dolls out and it was the first time I spoke in public without a script and I stared at probably half of the audience and I lost a lot of my stage fright, and now, whenever I think that I'm nervous before I go on stage, which you know is normal for everyone, I think of that memory and I go, if little ten-year-old Kyle could do this, I'm sure that 29-year-old would have no problem at all. And then like, it just sets me up to be an amazing public speaker. And I still feel that's a skill that I can put in my CV and say like, nine out of ten times I did not fail unless if I did not speak in English then I failed terribly.*

**Case Example 4**

Interviewee 4 was a 22-year-old male among the sample who scored the highest on psychopathy (213; $M = 145.21$, $SD = 23.43$, range $91 - 213$), and had a high narcissism score relative to the rest of the sample he was drawn from (27; $M = 13.65$, $SD = 6.72$, range $2 - 33$). His Machiavellianism scores were average (57; M $= 56.40$, SD $= 7.92$, range $40 - 77$). This interview stood out as particularly interesting because it was *qualitatively* different from the rest. One main feature of this interview was the frequent presence of "dead air", perhaps hesitations, after the interviewee was asked a question, accompanied by a frequent use of filler words such as '*ums*', although there was no indication that he was nervous. Interestingly, unlike the other interviewees, he was also the only person who has not touched upon any romantic encounters when talking about his life story.

The description of his nadir experience was about him pretending to be disabled as part of a prank. Elements of low agreeableness, impulsivity, irresponsibility, and antisociality were present. Retrospectively, Interviewee 4 described the incident as funny, but he also seemed to be aware that his actions were exploitative.

> *Even though—but what it says about me is that I like, pushing boundaries, and [clear throat] havin' a joke but that joke was probably a bit too far—it's probably quite sick. It didn't… sit particularly well with me in the days after, but, it was kinda—it sounds funny but it's not actually that funny when you're doing it [clear throat].*

It is unclear whether this awareness is an indication of him feeling remorseful, because at various points he would describe similar antisocial incidences and say how "*funny*" it was. In fact, in the entire interview, he said "*funny*" a total of 11 times – each time describing conducts that can be deemed socially inappropriate. However, after describing something unpleasant, he would almost always insert a caveat at the end indicating that he knew it was inappropriate.

The following excerpt was taken from a conversation about a turning point in Interviewee 4's life story. He was asked to leave the student halls, his accommodation at that time, after an incident of tampering with the fire alarm system, which he reports he was not involved in. In his meeting with the housing advisor, he talked about deliberately winding the housing advisor up. This lack of remorse, even when describing his behaviours that involved an apparent disregard for others, was indicated by being indifferent to the situation. There were also some tendencies of superiority and exhibitionism, as shown in his bragging about his participation in the Edinburgh Fringe, the largest art festival in the world:

> *… when I went in [laugh] there was three of them sitting there, I said—I made a joke about umm, how it was like The Apprentice, and I was just basically m—making jokes and taking none of it seriously. And uhh… that was just really winding her up. And then she said I had an attitude problem, and then I said uhuh this attitude is gonna get me into Edinburgh Fringe 2015, you're invited. And s—she was almost shaking with rage and it was… it was quite funny but I did get chucked out so ultimately it wasn't like, it wasn't a success overall.*

When asked why he thought being evicted from his accommodation was a turning point, he expressed how he tried not to be "*deliberately abrasive to people,*

*as much*". In his words, "*It's not like a natural thing to do. You've gotta force it but at the same time that's what I enjoy*". This shows that he has insights into his own behaviour.

At different points of the interview, Interviewee 4 did portray self-aggrandising tendencies and competitiveness, in which he *knowingly* pursued an unrealistic goal:

> *… like I uh I applied to Oxford and Cambridge, for, just for a laugh in fifth year in school. But umm like obviously I didn't have the grades to get in but I just applied like that's—like that, cause they all said that you got to apply, to, try and do your best so I just decided to apply for that, for a joke…*

While referring to other people's stand-up comedy careers, he regarded others as being less competent:

> *Yeah… but I don't—I don't think I'd like to do it as a… like I just do it for fun, like I don't think umm, I don't think it's a sustainable, it is like—there are people who you do see who do it for a living like, in Edinburgh and stuff, and it's like maybe like 30 grand a year job, you're working every night pretty much, saying the same things over and over again. And it's just, like there's travelling around, like it's—like it's pretty unhealthy. Doesn't look like—I wouldn't like that side of it. Like I like to travel around but it just seems pointless what these people do. Like really boring, and I'm better than them anyway so…*

A vague and superficial description style about an important childhood scene could be seen in the following conversation between the interviewer and Interviewee 4. There were repetitions of points but no extra details were given, despite being prompted multiple times. When recounting the incident about being trampled by about ten horses – what could be labelled as a rather unfortunate event, he described it as if it was a mundane occurrence, devoid of emotions. It was not clear why this incident was considered important to him:

> Interviewee 4 : *Alright OK OK. Alright ummm... Got trampled by some horses one time, umm… in the field. The horses was like little like Shetland ponies. They all trampled on me.*
>
> Interviewer : *What happened?*

*Interviewee 4* : *Don't know, they're just scared I think. And they sort of ran over me. I was okay, but… I was quite—what else. That was maybe like ten or something like that.*

*Interviewer* : *What were you feeling? Were you scared?*

*Interviewee 4* : *Uhh… [pause] no I don't—just… shocked, I suppose. I did get trampled by like ten horses but I was fine [laugh]. Umm… and that's really it. It's not really a good memory actually—it's not really a big thing but… that's all I have really [clear throat].*

*Interviewer* : *Were you… riding the horses? Or what were you doing there?*

*Interviewee 4* : *No it just—we just—we just went to a field, with all the horses in them. I was obviously so small. Something scared them, they just sort of—sort of like ran over me.*

*Interviewer* : *Did any family member find out? That you were trampled by horses?*

*Interviewee 4* : *Yeah oh yeah, I was with a family member. My granddad and dad. So I was there with them. So, we went to the field just to sort of, clapped at them, and they all, ran, ran over me.*

Another feature that stood out in this interview was the rather odd (disturbing even) scenes or stories Interviewee 4 encountered from his family friends. Again, he described these events as "*funny*", and in his narration he giggled and laughed a number of times. He seemed to derive joy gleaned from the pain of others, both humans and animals, in which his descriptions of unpleasant events experienced by others were accompanied by laughter, as seen in two incidences shown below. It is also worth contrasting the expression of joy towards other people's suffering, to the unemotional attitude towards his own injury.

*Interviewee 4* : *[pause] Umm... there's one that my granddad told me about. Umm, a friend of his, his dog, he—he went out umm, shooting. Like he just shoots rabbits. And when you ahh… shoot rabbits like you shoot them, and then the dog runs out and like, retrieves and brings the rabbit back? And umm, yeah the dog that wasn't— his friend had a dog that wasn't doing it—wasn't doing something right, so he shot a rabbit and then waited till the dog got out there and then shot the dog. It was with a, it was with a shot gun so it's not like—didn't kill the dog it just sprays the bullet. So he had like [laugh], it had like [laugh], he*

> basically shot it in the arse, with his gun [laugh], with his bullet, just to teach him a lesson. That's quite a funny story. And then he... [laugh] so yeah, so that's one. That one that he's got. There's a few from my granddad and he's got quite a few funny ones.

Interviewer        :    *Do you want to just tell me a bit about that?*

Interviewee 4    :    *Yeah, what else did he do. He put a… an old a football, like he took a rock and put it in the football, and waited till his boss, like him and his friend waited till his boss came along, put the football down like right in the middle of the corridor, and then obviously like a lot of people if you see a football you can't help but kick it. And then he kicked it he broke his foot so [laugh]. Done a lot of bad stuff. I think that's what I get it from. The bad—the bad streak.*

Interviewer        :    *Do you think?*

Interviewee 4    :    *Maybe, I don't know. See we're quite similar. I find that quite funny as well but obviously [laugh] the guy did break his foot so it was kinda a shame but…*

Even at the end of the interview, when asked to reflect on his experiences of the interview, Interviewee 4 seemed amused by the suffering of animals. He showed a reasonable degree of insight into his own personality in that he seemed well-aware that he might have been on the extreme end of a certain personality continuum, but did not identify with being a psychopath:

> *Ehm… yeah, I thought it was—I thought it was good. I hope you get the right sort of research. Cause I was aware when I did the allocation online, like I answered something like, because they are those sort of questions that you can't—there's set criteria, you can't give, like sometimes you've got to say yes when really it's something in between. So like, my only—I was just completely honest, so maybe you got like more, extreme data from my thing. Cause I thought like there was a question like umm, like, what was wrong with it… it was like do you see an animal, like if you see an animal in distress, is this—is this like whatever to you, do you like feel really sad? Well I don't actually feel that sad it's an animal [laugh] I don't why, but that makes you sound like some sort of like, psychopath but, I answered them honestly so I just wanted to see what it was—it was about. It was quite good. But humans in distress, yeah definitely. If you've ever heard a noise of a pig, being hit by a taser. Listen to it, YouTube it. Pig tasers. It's quite a funny noise [laugh]. Yeah I mean, delete your history afterwards make sure you do that, but yeah. Google it. Very funny.*

The concluding statements of the interview include a sarcastic comment about research accompanied by a smirk, as well as nonchalant remarks about death:

> *Umm. I just—yeah. I just really like, having a laugh. I just think you should always try and have a good time. Have a good laugh. But some things important like research [laugh]. But ultimately you just try and have a good time. Not take it too seriously. Cause you might die in a few years, you never know. Hopefully you don't. Hopefully I don't, but. Cause I could get killed. I don't think I'm gonna take the underpass on my way back I think I'm gonna walk across the road so… that's it.*

## Discussion

To illustrate the distinctiveness among the Dark Triad traits, it should be first noted that a participant who scored highly in one trait might not have necessarily scored high in the other two. Interviewee 4 was the only participant who scored high on both narcissism and psychopathy scales. Generally, all four participants exhibited speech content and style that are largely archetypal of their respective Dark Triad characteristics.

Although Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 4 both scored extremely high on the self-report psychopathy scale, there were similarities and variations between their life stories in terms of content and style. First, there was a lack of thematic coherence (i.e., general theme of one's life story) in the overall narratives for both Interviewees 1 and 4. Second, both Interviewees 1 and 4 described experiences of irresponsible behaviour as part of their life chapters. Understandably, these pattern of behaviour can be quite common in teenagers. However, an alternative interpretation is that these memories are self-defining (Singer & Salovey, 1993). An early narrative theory of personality by Tomkins (1979) suggests that like playwrights, individuals organise their emotional life in terms of salient scenes and recurrent scripts.

Both Interviewees 1 and 4 may have appeared *behaviourally* alike, but repeated evaluations of the recordings and transcripts showed that the narrative account of Interviewee 1 depicted a relatively erratic lifestyle compared to Interviewee 4, which could be partially attributed to the former's history of maltreatment and exposure to stressful life events (Poythress et al., 2010; Tatar, Cauffman, Kimonis, & Skeem, 2012). Here, the implications of the distinction between primary and secondary psychopathy are critical (Karpman, 1948). On one

hand, there have been theoretical and empirical evidence pointing towards the role of adverse environments in secondary psychopathy. Karpman ascribed parenting roles such as rejection, harsh punishments, and abuse to the emergence of secondary psychopathy, whereas Porter (1996) focused on the experience of generalised childhood trauma. However, beyond this distinction in the description of environmental characteristics, both theories suggest that Interviewee 1's detachment of emotions reflected in her narrative account of sexual abuse could be potentially interpreted as a sign of the secondary variant of psychopathy (granted that other traits or processes could have contributed to this development of psychopathic tendencies). With trauma resulting from continuous and repeated abuse, the sufferer may have reduced ability to recall a specific personal event, as well as the propensity to describe general, prototypical, autobiographical memories, a phenomenon known as *overgeneral memory retrieval* (Aglan, Williams, Pickles, & Hill, 2010). It was also observed that Interviewee 1 did not describe events showing interpersonal exploitation or aggression in her overall narrative.

As for Interviewee 4, general antisocial deviance was not associated with any childhood trauma, at least not as portrayed in his narrative. He also did not describe any event that depicted an erratic lifestyle. Interviewee 4's general grandiose and callous-unemotional demeanour during the interview and social manipulation tendencies make him fit more appropriately into the primary psychopathy profile (Coyne & Thomas, 2008; Vaillancourt & Sunderani, 2011). Primary, rather than secondary psychopaths, have been found to lack empathy and gain pleasurable affect from other's distress (Ali, Amorim, & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2009; Wai & Tiliopoulos, 2012). This shows that it is worth assessing these variants within psychopathy separately, even if pure primary or secondary types are relatively rare.

Incidentally, according to Paulhus's (2014) review, the tendency to gain enjoyment from cruelty is part of the *sadism* trait. This is speculative – the assessment of sadism has not been included in the current project – but there is an indication that sadistic and psychopathic tendencies do overlap.

The contradictory style of speaking portrayed by Interviewee 1, where she expressed streams of convoluted and rather poorly organised thoughts, may suggest an inability to integrate pieces of information into a coherent whole or an underlying difficulty monitoring her own speech (Hare, 1993), or perhaps a general lower verbal ability. Interviewee 4, on the other hand, seemed to have trouble verbalising specific

personal experiences, but not thoughts about more global issues. This pattern is in line with the notion that antisocial populations may possess emotional memory impairments (Dolan & Fullam, 2005). Indeed, Keltikangas-Järvinen (1982) in her interviews with offenders who had disabilities in expressing emotions, found that they had nothing to say about themselves or about their lives because "everything was so normal". Nevertheless, Interviewee 4's level of abstract and logical thinking appeared intact, shown by his knowledge and critical evaluation of surrounding global issues. However, as Maughs (1967) puts it, to a psychopath, vague questions are responded with vague answers. Individuals with psychopathy interpret questions in a very concrete manner, and it is untrue to assume that every statement from a person with psychopathy involves a disregard for truth.

The narrative presented by Interviewee 2 seemed to suggest the idea that Machiavellian views are possible strategic responses to adversities. In this way, children who are not optimistic about their prospects may attain competitive and manipulative attitudes as they grow up, perceiving the world as an unfair, hostile place (Láng & Lénárd, 2015). From an evolutionary point of view, the life history theory can be used to explain how personality traits may be products of trade-offs when one is confronted with environmental challenges (Brumbach, Figueredo, & Ellis, 2009; McDonald, Donnellan, & Navarrete, 2012). Unpredictable conditions such as poverty and low socioeconomic status in Interviewee 2's life may have produced fast life history strategies, possibly explaining how she managed to cope with life and work even under adverse circumstances.

One key question that arises when examining morality is how one determines which moral decisions are "correct" (Conway & Gawronski, 2013). On the one hand, deontological or duty-based approaches are more concerned with what people do, instead of the consequences of their actions. In this sense, certain actions would be considered morally impermissible in themselves, for instance, it is wrong to take an innocent life regardless of how many lives may be saved. On the other hand, the utilitarian view is that the best action is one that brings about the greatest total well-being or benefit to the majority, therefore, taking an innocent life is justifiable if it minimises total possible harm. Interviewee 2 who demonstrated high levels of Machiavellianism exhibited a distinctly cynical view of society, but in response to what others would consider an ethical dilemma, she seemed to exhibit a logical understanding, evident through her eloquent and well-thought-out responses.

Indeed, Machiavellians have been shown to display greater preferences for utilitarian options when responding to moral dilemmas (Bartels & Pizarro, 2011), but it is difficult to tell if this endorsement was due to underlying affective impoverishment or because of genuine concern for the welfare of others.

Additionally, while traditionally most would agree that marital infidelity falls outside the boundaries of moral decency, Interviewee 2 appeared to have less concern with conventional morality, demonstrating more accepting attitudes towards unrestricted sociosexuality. Even so, she displayed logical, coherent, and analytical reasoning in her discourse, perhaps not at the conventional level of moral reasoning, but logical nonetheless. In this regard, Machiavellians may be more flexible and sensitive to situational factors, contributing to their success in the social context (Bereczkei & Czibor, 2014).

Consistent with the depiction of individuals high in narcissism, Interviewee 3 showed signs of gregariousness, intense ambitions, social boldness, and dominance. His speech was fluent, almost free of any interruptions. As an individual working in academia, the narrative by Interviewee 3 included a lot of exhibitionistic statements and self-aggrandising references to his academic achievements, which could be interpreted as a communication pattern intended (or unintended) to direct attention to himself (Buss & Chiodo, 1991). During the interview, he was seen to refer to occasions that put the spotlight on himself, such as discussing the need to talk to his therapist about various issues.

However, the narrative content did not show any particular instance where Interviewee 3 lacked empathy or was interpersonally abusive, which are the hallmarks of narcissism (and a feature shared in all three Dark Triad traits). In fact, apart from Interviewee 4, none of the other interviewees' narrative contained descriptions of low empathy and interpersonal manipulation. One way to look at the finding with regard to Interviewee 3 is to reconsider what the Narcissistic Personality Inventory actually measures. Ackerman et al. (2011) who supported a three-factor solution (i.e., Leadership/Authority, Grandiose Exhibitionism, and Entitlement/Exploitativeness) for the Narcissistic Personality Inventory, have maintained that the Leadership/Authority factor is generally associated with positive outcomes and most likely unrelated to pathological narcissism. Interviewee 3 was indeed a high-functioning, high-achieving individual who portrayed leadership abilities, as seen in his narrative. This finding backs the view that narcissism has

positive and negative aspects; most narcissists portray extraverted behaviours such as being talkative and sociable (Holtzman et al., 2010; Paulhus, 1998, 2001). In future work, it is probably more sensible for researchers interested in the psychological and behavioural correlates of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory to examine the measure at a facet level.

## Limitations and Future Directions

It is acknowledged that the small number of participants poses some limitations to the current study, but several practical factors led to difficulties in recruiting a larger sample. As this study targeted those who exist at the far end of a continuum of Dark Triad traits, combined with the unwillingness of this population to be involved in activities that do not benefit them, participant recruitment was a major challenge. Besides, participants in the current study were relatively young, and clearly with age one would have had more time to reflect on the past, making the life story more thematically coherent.

Moreover, the analysis of text was performed on discourse transcribed from face-to-face interviews. Language styles are adaptive and should be considered within the context in which the interaction occurs. Data collected from the life story interviews may not be equivalent to those obtained from less structured settings. For instance, in computer-mediated communications, individuals high in Dark Triad traits were found to be less effective in their manipulation strategies (Crossley et al., 2016).

It is also critical to understand that there is not one single agreed-upon theory or method of analysis that has defined this field. The ideas presented here are subject to other possible interpretations. It is recognised that a number of problems are associated with qualitative approaches to text analysis. To establish validity, multiple trained raters or judges are required to evaluate and develop systematic coding schemes. Studies with other groups of individuals high in Dark Triad traits in various contexts should be conducted to establish the reliability of the findings reported above.

A common critique of case study research is that the method maintains a bias toward verification, or a tendency to confirm the researcher's preconceived notions. The alleged deficiency of qualitative methods is that they presumably allow more room for one's subjective and arbitrary judgment than quantitative methods.

Although this criticism is valid, it should be mentioned that subjectivism and bias toward verification are fundamental phenomena that apply to all methods in social science research. According to Flyvbjerg (2006), in reality, many qualitative researchers typically report subsequently that their preconceived ideas and assumptions were incorrect, and that the findings have compelled them to revise their hypotheses. As with all research methods, the researcher's own biases and assumptions were reflected upon during the course of data analysis; it is acknowledged that preconceptions about Dark Triad behaviours and their correlates may have been a confounder during the interview as well as the analysis of the interview transcripts. The general practice of being critically reflexive is of paramount importance in order to establish the quality, validity, and trustworthiness of findings (Begoray & Banister, 2010).

On a side note, researchers should also be more cautious of "expert" speech analysts who claim that certain language-based analysis methods (e.g., Voice Stress Analysis) can reliably detect deception, with accuracy rates exceeding 95% (e.g., Chapman & Stathis, 2012). Given the current state of knowledge, it is safe to say that even in highly controlled conditions, no human judge or computerised programme can reliably examine personality or behaviour constructs with such remarkable accuracy.

## Conclusion

Undoubtedly, an emphasis on the "abnormal" aspects of the Machiavellian's, narcissist's, or psychopath's behaviour may contribute to diagnostic error. However, case study methods have been regarded as a useful adjunct to other data collection methods that involve large samples. Further, idiographic approaches are particularly useful for the development of hypotheses.

As shown in the case examples in the current study, traces of Dark Triad characteristics can be found in the language used by high-functioning university students located on the extreme high end of the respective Dark Triad traits spectrum. The narrative content and style of each participant was archetypal of their respective Dark Triad features. However, the one feature that is shared by all three Dark Triad traits – callousness – was not consistently found across the case examples. It goes to show that nuanced influences are often involved in the

expression of personality traits; people high in Dark Triad personalities may not necessarily exhibit antisocial behaviours across situations and contexts.

Given its fundamental nature, the conclusions drawn from this study cannot be taken as definitive. At a minimum, the results presented here serve as a foundation to establish face validity, confirming that a narrative analysis of language use by people high in Dark Triad traits is one of the many useful ways to understanding these traits.

Many successful individuals high in Dark Triad constructs enact superiority through communication processes, especially in face-to-face interactions. Therefore, it is useful to devise ways other than computer-assisted programmes to critically analyse language use by people who can potentially cause harm to others. The approach to analysing speech provided in this study may be able to serve as a guiding reference for dealing with such interactions. Being equipped with the knowledge of how Dark Triad manifests in natural speech can be useful to avoid being taken in by those high on the Dark Triad scales.

**Chapter 7:    General Discussion and Future Directions**

**General Discussion**

The main aim of this mixed method research was to examine the interpersonal perception between individuals high in Dark Triad traits and their targets of manipulation.  Three studies explored each Dark Triad trait, in an attempt to illuminate the relationship between each Dark Triad traits and the different ways in which they manifest in a social context.  In this final chapter, a summary and general discussion of the findings in all three studies are outlined.  The theoretical and practical significance of this piece of work, its limitations, as well as some directions for future research are also covered.

**Study 1: Dark Triad Personalities' Perception of Others**

Study 1 investigated the extent to which perceptions of Dark Triad high-scorers accurately correspond to personality and emotional attributes, as well as vulnerability to social victimisation within their targets for manipulation.  The cues those high on Dark Triad scales use in their judgements were considered.  There were indications that they are accurate in their judgements of personality and vulnerability, but these pieces of evidence are not concrete because accuracy findings were inconsistent.  Two possible explanations are offered.

It can be argued that this accuracy is context-dependent.  As Funder (2012) puts it, moderating variables including "good target", "good trait", "good information", and "good judge" play crucial roles in determining the extent to which personality judgements are accurate.  It could be that in videos where these "good" variables were present (or rather, where these variables were visible to the perceivers), Dark Triad high-scorers were indeed better at judging targets' traits.  Findings from Study 1 also suggest that people high on Dark Triad measures use more cues when assessing traits and vulnerability of others.  Simply put, people high in Dark Triad traits seem to "have an eye for" a range of verbal and non-verbal indicators for judgements of others, even if their actual judgement may not necessarily be accurate.  This adds support to the notion that social manipulators rely on a series of contextual cues as part of their evaluation and manipulation strategies.

There was, however, a general tendency for high Dark Triad individuals to perceive all targets as being vulnerable, which seems to support negative–other bias

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models. This suggests that the accuracy shown by Dark Triad high-scorers is alternatively a chance outcome or fluke, and that those high in Dark Triad traits simply view everyone as potentially vulnerable and susceptible to manipulation. This tendency of seeing people as vulnerable could be attributed to a general antagonism core, which requires further corroborating evidence. Indeed, the psychopath's antisociality, the Machiavellian's misanthropy, and the narcissists' self-love largely suggest that they express negativity towards others. For instance, elements of social dominance have indicated that Dark Triad traits are positively associated with prejudice, specifically outgroup threat perceptions and anti-immigrant attitudes (Hodson et al., 2009).

Less agreeable individuals who tend to be more occupied with their pursuit of self-serving goals have indeed been found to be more prejudiced (Ekehammar & Akrami, 2003), in which they believe some individuals belong to certain social classes or statuses that are inferior to them. For example, biographies of Adolf Hitler have suggested that he displayed malignant narcissism, and this characteristic manifested in his ideas of genocide and beliefs in racial "purity" and superiority (Ferriday, Vartanian, & Mandel, 2011; Kershaw, 1998; Mandel, 2002). Further, there have been instances when Donald Trump, who can be considered a prototypical example of a person high in Dark Triad traits, made ill-advised remarks, putting issues of race and gender at the forefront of his presidential discourse (Zakaria, 2016; Zelizer, 2016). Placing such individuals in positions of power can be detrimental; the effects of manipulative behaviours are not limited to the targeted individual, but may result in a negative impact on organisational and societal culture.

**Study 2: "Enabling" Social Manipulation and Victimisation**

Study 2 examined the characteristics of individuals who seemingly condone and abet individuals high in Dark Triad traits by examining their susceptibility to manipulation as measured by the Vulnerability Scale. When mapped onto the Big Five Inventory, it was shown that predictors of vulnerability include low extraversion, low conscientiousness, high neuroticism, and high agreeableness.

The vignette technique was used to bring about people's perceptions of Dark Triad behaviours. Participants were first split into high and low vulnerability groups based on their Vulnerability Scale scores. The way in which these two groups responded to the Likert-type statements showed statistically significant differences.

Specifically, individuals with lower vulnerability were more assertive in their opinions, in other words, they were more affirmative (or negative) on the five-point Likert spectrum, compared to those who had higher vulnerability.

Linguistic and text analyses of the responses to open-ended questions also revealed that both vulnerability groups presented different response style when describing the characters in the vignettes. The low vulnerability group was generally more assertive in stating their opinions, and in language that is more derogatory, especially when describing the Dark Triad characters. The more vulnerable group, on the other hand, was more likely to attribute the behaviours of both characters to uncontrollable circumstances, such as having an unhappy childhood or being too blindly in love. It can be inferred that vulnerable individuals possibly see grey zones in manipulative interactions, indicating that context plays a relatively bigger role in their perceptions of destructive behaviour.

People who are susceptible to being physically and emotionally victimised often suffer negative short- and long-term consequences. One pathway to social victimisation, more pertinent to individuals susceptible to manipulation in Study 2, might involve psychological maladjustment and its links to how such individuals might interpret the cause of their harassment. From an attributional perspective, characterological self-blame refers to attributions that are internal (i.e., "*it's me*"), stable (i.e., "*things will always be that way*"), and uncontrollable (i.e., "*there's nothing I can do to change it*"); this involves attributions to a relatively non-modifiable source, which is one's character. Previous research has shown that experiences of peer victimisation during childhood is related to elevated levels of characterological self-blame. People who make characterological attributions for adverse outcomes have reported to have a poorer coping mechanism, have a negative view of themselves, and are more prone to depression.

Moreover, the Dark Triad is said to have evolved to facilitate short-term mating in men, and that women appear to perceive Dark Triad men to be more attractive. It is possible that the increased attractiveness is not directly associated with the malevolent Dark Triad qualities, but rather the more positive traits that people high on Dark Triad scales possess, namely confidence, hard-headedness, willingness to take risks, and so on. The responses to the open-ended questions in Study 2 indeed pointed to this explanation. Malevolent leaders who appear to be high on the Dark Triad spectrum, for instance, use grand illusions to draw followers

into their toxic territory where the manipulation occurs, exploiting the followers' psychological needs and fears. Strong and charismatic leaders are able to use powerful rhetoric, especially in times of crises, to motivate followers. Destructive leaders, on the other hand, make use of their charm to deliver visions that exploit followers' needs. This explains why the masses, despite being able to recognise the destructive qualities that such leaders possess, still tolerate, condone, and encourage such behaviours.

The findings in Study 2 suggest two things. The first is that the 'enablers' possess stable attributes and psychological needs that put them more at risk of being socially manipulated. The manipulator is then able to exploit such needs for personal gain. The second is that the victimisation or exploitation incident itself sets processes in motion, increases the victim's problem behaviour, and in turn compounds later victimisation risk. Those who have been in relationships or circumstances that are abusive are likely to seek situations that are conducive for manipulation to take place. This suggests a vicious cycle where victimisation or exploitation leads to subsequent victimisation, partly due to the victim's attitudes and behaviour that encourage negative or unhealthy conduct, as well as internalisation of problems.

**Study 3: Language Use as a Marker of Dark Triad Personality**

Study 3 qualitatively assessed language as a marker of Dark Triad traits using text analysis. Case studies of four individuals high on the subclinical self-report measures of the Dark Triad revealed that their linguistic patterns were largely in line with the theoretical conceptions of each Dark Triad trait. The speech content and style appeared to vary across all four participants, which points to the uniqueness of each Dark Triad trait, although this observation needs to be further validated in future work. Life story narratives are particularly helpful for researchers to explore past and current life events and how these can contribute to the development of Dark Triad tendencies, especially when used in combination with other approaches.

Undoubtedly, childhood experiences, especially adverse ones, play an important role in shaping one's personality, and findings from Study 3 seem to suggest this. An interactionist stance asserts that one's behaviour is a by-product of the interplay between genetic and environmental factors. A predisposition for socially aversive behaviour as a result of inherited characteristics can be modified by

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the environment, meaning it can be aggravated by risk factors such as poverty, poor education, and ineffective parenting practices. The life story research method also allows an examination of an individual's language use in the narration process. The results demonstrate how different aspects of personality, especially psychopathology-related personality traits such as the Dark Triad, may manifest in people's verbal behaviour.

The exploratory nature of Study 3 is by no means an intensive, in-depth examination of case examples commonly seen in clinical or forensic contexts. However, the findings have some general implications for the understanding of person perception. Speech content and style is a marker of personality, and people rely on how others speak when evaluating others. For example, it can be argued that national leaders are and must be concerned about the language they use when communicating to the public. Language can be persuasive and manipulative, and have the capacity to influence others' thoughts and emotions, as evident in political contexts as well as criminal contexts. The manipulator always has to interact with the potential target of manipulation and this can change the course of the both their behaviours significantly. Individuals who score high on the Dark Triad measures do not operate in a vacuum; the responses of others on the receiving end make a difference in how such individuals behave socially. This helps explain how questionable leaders gain power and why people tolerate their abusive partners.

It is also acknowledged that the adoption of the life story interview approach may not necessarily be practical for on-the-spot use, but it is demonstrated that there are unconventional methods as alternatives for talent acquisition and recruitment in the occupational setting. The shortfall of traditional interviews is that they can elicit a hypothetical answer that may or may not reflect how candidates really behave. Some companies (e.g., Ashoka U, Shopify) have utilised an adaptation of the life story interview as part of their recruitment strategy as it adds new layers of data to the candidate picture, helping decision-makers evaluate the candidate in a slightly more holistic way, but the usefulness of this practice has yet to be evaluated.

**Summary**

From the data collected from all three studies, there were two main research outcomes. First, the main theme of interactive context between the socially destructive and those susceptible to victimisation was constantly applied and

discussed throughout. It can be said that individuals high in Dark Triad traits are successful in their manipulation attempts in contexts that enable their antisocial behaviour. Second, bearing in mind the importance of researching the three traits in tandem, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism are theoretically separable traits that entail different behavioural outcomes, hence one should be wary not to assume the Dark Triad to be a unitary construct. These issues, along with several big questions in the research of the Dark Triad concept, are discussed next in terms of their contribution to knowledge.

## Practical Applications of the Current Project

Since Dark Triad personalities are detrimental to the long-term success of an organisation, it is important to implement measures to prevent and tackle instances of socially aversive behaviour. If the supposition that successful manipulators rely on appearances, verbal cues, and body language of others to convey appeal is true, a traditional face-to-face interviewing platform within the occupational context will increase the chances of hiring people with high levels of socially aversive traits. One potential way of preventing people high in Dark Triad traits from deploying superficial charm and sizing up interviewers or stakeholders is to use recorded or asynchronous video interviewing in staff recruitment. This is an emerging selection procedure that can be used in the screening stage of the selection process (Brenner, Ortner, & Fay, 2016). In such interviews, job applicants record their responses to predefined questions, and decision makers watch the videos and evaluate the applicants. A main advantage of this delayed evaluation is that it allows organisations to more carefully scrutinise the interview responses by interviewees prior to making recruitment decisions.

Another significant practical implication of the current project is that an understanding of "victim" personality characteristics can contribute to measures and interventions directed at victimisation and harassment. This must not be interpreted as a 'victim-blaming' attitude, but instead, it is important to highlight strategies that can equip potential victims with knowledge and awareness in order to prevent victimisation.

Further, from the literature, language analysis seems to be a promising means of evaluating personality traits, but it is argued that this is rather a reductionist approach to understanding aversive traits. Besides, with the existing technology, the

drawback of an automated text analysis method is that it can only be applicable when a written or transcribed verbal text is available. Another concern raised by Pennebaker (2011) is that the long-term success of the LIWC text analysis method may be limited if users are able to determine which categories are most predictive of future performance, and use this knowledge to present themselves in the best possible light. Hence, under circumstances that involve complex and unpredictable environments, a subjective evaluation of one's traits can actually be beneficial (Gibbs, Merchant, Van der Stede, & Vargus, 2009), which is why idiographic approaches are still preferable for gaining interesting and useful insights about an individual.

### Emergent Issues from the Dark Triad Research and Directions for Future

The nature of this research did not permit an investigation into other behavioural correlates involved in the understanding of the Dark Triad. There are, however, several theoretically meaningful moderators of Dark Triad manipulative behaviours and victimisation that can be taken into account in future research.

### The Dark Triad between Culturally Distinct Societies

The current project has focused mainly on a Western, educated sample. However, it is undeniable that culture plays a fundamental role in human biology (Richerson & Boyd, 2004). For example, more than three decades ago Kleinman and Good (1985) observed cross cultural subtleties within the study of depression that could not be explained by simple evolutionary or genetic interpretation. There has since been a call to extend the current work on gene–environment interaction in psychiatry and psychology to a model of gene–culture–environment interaction (Wallace, 2009).

It is therefore especially crucial for future research to assess the relevance of the Dark Triad traits in non-Western societies, considering that the constructs and measures have emerged from the West. It is pointed out that in the meta-analysis of Dark Triad and work behaviour by O'Boyle et al. (2012), there were only 4 out of 186 studies that drew samples from predominantly collectivistic societies. The fact that the vast majority of papers have been based on Western, educated, industrialised, rich, and democratic (WEIRD) participants can present a challenge to

the understanding of how the Dark Triad plays out in other contexts (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010).

**Moral Responsibilities of Individuals High in Dark Triad Traits**

Much as such Dark Triad traits are met with disapproval, there are more serious challenges posed to the judicial community. In the case of psychopathy (commonly viewed as the darkest), for example, given that there has been evidence from the literature that shows that psychopaths have substantial moral cognition and empathy impairments, blaming them for their behaviour is arguably futile or unjustified.

However, the law in many countries consider psychopathy to be unambiguously negative; in fact, psychopathic traits are often deemed as an aggravating factor, resulting in more severe sentences (Godman & Jefferson, 2017). While some scholars have pointed out that people high in psychopathy do not choose to become psychopaths hence they cannot be held responsible at a moral level (Matravers, 2007), other researchers have challenged this view, emphasising that psychopaths are capable of articulating right from wrong and therefore they should be held fully and legally responsible for their immoral actions (Cima, Tonnaer, & Hauser, 2010). This is a non-trivial issue because lay (and academic) perceptions of the Dark Triad traits and beliefs about these traits' behavioural manifestations, aetiology, and treatment prospects partly determine whether people hold sympathetic or stigmatising attitudes towards such individuals.

Considering that personality is commonly defined as a construct that comprises thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that recur consistently over time, raising personality disorders as a mitigating factor in criminal trials could be risky, as it can imply that the sufferer has a poor prospect of rehabilitation. These arguments underline the inherent complexity and ambiguity of psycholegal evaluations; researchers, policy makers, and practitioners alike *should be* aware, or should be made aware that a simplistic, one-size-fits-all approach to the practice of forensic mental health is problematic. For practitioners who assess the Dark Triad traits as part of culpability decision, concerns about the conceptualisation of each trait as well as measurement issues are raised. It is important to adopt a more critical perspective towards psychometric testing, an issue highlighted in the following section.

**Is the Dark Triad Better Studied Using the Dimensional or Taxonic Approach?**

Even if the individual high in the Dark Triad does not commit an illegal act, the damage he or she causes can be long-lasting and devastating. In short, relationships with Dark Triad individuals are problematic even outside of criminal and clinical contexts. As mentioned in the introduction, the emergence of the Dark Triad concept drew on apparently distinct research traditions, with the study of psychopathy largely based on offender and forensic samples, the conceptualisation of narcissism derived from psychiatric patients in a clinical setting, and the term Machiavellianism more embedded in a political and social context. Machiavellianism seems to be the only one of the three constructs that is not traditionally seen as a clinical syndrome, but rather a "normal" personality trait.

However, with regard to examining pathological personality traits, personality and social psychologists generally supports the position that personality exhibits a dimensional structure. Therefore, on a continuous variable that differentiates normal from pathological, there should be no uniform cut-off score (e.g., Livesley, Schroeder, Jackson, & Jang, 1994; Markon, Krueger, & Watson, 2005; Widiger, Simonsen, Krueger, Livesley, & Verheul, 2005). To view personality as a dimensional construct is to assume that individuals differ in degree, instead of in type.

In contrast, with the main goal of employing diagnostic criteria to identify individuals at risk of psychological conditions, clinical psychologists typically adopt the taxonic approach in order to "accurately" classify patients into groups, enabling appropriate treatments to be put into operation (e.g., American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Harris, Rice, & Quinsey, 1994).

To reiterate, the stance of the current project is that theoretical conceptions of each Dark Triad trait suggest that these three traits are qualitatively different despite having similar behavioural correlates, implying that the Dark Triad trait is best measured as a taxonic variable. However, it should also be noted that each of these three traits exists on a continuum and everyone possess all traits to some degree. This highlights that whilst it is important to use valid and reliable self-report measures to assess the Dark Triad traits, it is also more useful to incorporate informant reports for a more thorough understanding of the individual.

Additionally, Hart (2009) has cautioned about the over-reliance on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders and self-report measures

when trying to obtain a comprehensive assessment of psychopathic symptomology within forensic settings.  In such situations, it has been suggested that a combination of structured and unstructured clinical judgments, guided by theory, experience, and common sense may be more useful for the general understanding of psychopathy. The same should hold true for understanding non-clinical aversive personality traits in general.

## Measurement and Analytic Issues

With the ever-growing number of publications in this area, proper assessment and statistical techniques must be established.  The central question at the heart of the Dark Triad literature, as mentioned at the start of this thesis, is whether the three traits should be combined under one index.  However, *it is still unclear where the boundaries and definitions of these three traits lie*.

With reference to the DSM-IV, the comorbidity in the Narcissistic Personality Disorder and Antisocial Personality Disorder, and the fact that sufferers of both personality disorders share a tendency of being tough-minded, superficial, exploitative, and less empathic, has caused confusion for clinical assessments.  To make matters more complicated, according to the DSM-IV and DSM-5 criteria, a pervasive pattern of grandiosity is the key feature of the Narcissistic Personality Disorder, whereas the Antisocial Personality Disorder is characterised primarily by impulsivity, deceit, and aggression.  Nevertheless, in many cases grandiosity is a key feature of psychopathy (Harpur, Hare, & Hakstian, 1989), and narcissism is marked by a manipulative and deceitful interpersonal style as well as unprovoked aggression (Schoenleber, Sadeh, & Verona, 2011; Vazire & Funder, 2006).  Concerns have been raised that efforts to disentangle these two personality disorders in particular are challenging.

Many studies on the Dark Triad led by Jonason and colleagues have been based on the notion of combining the traits into a single composite, and many other researchers have followed suit (e.g., Gordon & Platek, 2009; Holtzman, 2011), but this approach has its limitations.  The confirmatory factor analyses conducted by Jonason and his team has resulted in a single factor, and it can be argued that this single factor is a result of exhausting the degrees of freedom in a three-trait variance or covariance matrix, which by definition would result in a one-factor extraction

(Brown, 2006). However, it is acknowledged that the studies by Jonason and colleagues have reported both composite and individual scores.

Machiavellianism is typically characterised by strategic malevolence and intact (if not superior) impulse regulation (Jones & Paulhus, 2009), but psychopathy describes erratic behaviour and poor impulse control (Cleckley, 1976; Hare, 1993). It is apparent that one cannot possess and lack impulse control at the same time (Jones & Figueredo, 2013). Narcissism, the least "dark" of the three, is undoubtedly in many respects unique, in that narcissists are usually socially desirable, exhibiting behaviours that are beneficial for themselves but entails no consequences for others (Rauthmann & Kolar, 2012; Veselka et al., 2011). Findings in Study 3 of the current project are especially consistent with these propositions. There is therefore little rationale, both theoretically and statistically, to use a single Dark Triad composite.

The utility, validity, and reliability of the individual measures for each trait are some of the concerns in Dark Triad research. For instance, the items in the MACH-IV by Christie and Geis (1970) for the assessment of Machiavellian tendencies are undoubtedly still relevant, but this tool has undergone little development since its introduction.

In response to the criticism of the MACH-IV, there have been recent attempts to formulate new measures, such as the Machiavellian Personality Scale (MPS; Dahling et al., 2009) and the Organisational Machiavellianism Scale (OMS; Kessler et al., 2010). However, a review by Miller, Smart, and Rechner (2015) revealed that the MPS suffers from some of the same issues as the MACH-IV, in that its subscales failed to yield acceptable alpha reliabilities. As for the OMS, there have been few studies dedicated to examining its validity and reliability. It has been mentioned in Chapter 1 that Kessler et al. (2010) developed the OMS based on the concept of Machiavellianism in the occupational context, bearing in mind that not all Machiavellian behaviours are negative. In this regard, the operational definition of Machiavellianism, especially within the Dark Triad, requires more clarity.

In the current project, it was likewise observed that some of the MACH-IV subscales had low levels of internal consistencies. The Morality facet of Machiavellianism had only two items and an extremely low Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.11$). This does not come as a surprise given the positive relationships between number of items and the value of alpha (Carmines & Zeller, 1979). It is also noted that the MACH-IV contains several items that are problematic, such as double-

barrelled items that represent multiple ideas (e.g., *All in all it is better to be humble and honest than to be important and dishonest*). Respondents who do not fully identify with these multiple ideas may find it difficult to answer, resulting in invalid responses (Spector, 1992). Therefore, a more refined Machiavellianism scale with a mutually agreed upon operational definition is definitely needed in future research.

In addition, the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1988), which is the most commonly used measure to assess non-clinical narcissism, has been criticised for not being a valid measure (e.g., Brown et al., 2009; Cain et al., 2008; Pincus & Lukowitsky, 2010; Rosenthal & Hooley, 2010). One criticism is that it does not capture sufficiently the socially malevolent tendencies of narcissists, but rather taps into the prosocial features of the construct.

However, as put forward by Miller and Campbell (2012), there is nothing inherently normal or non-pathological about scoring high on the NPI. First, the NPI has been associated with malevolent behaviours, including aggression (Bushman et al., 2009), antisocial behaviour (Miller et al., 2010), and academic cheating (Nathanson, Paulhus, & Williams, 2006), to name a few. Second, Miller et al. (2009) have found that moderate to strong positive correlations between the self-report NPI scores and the DSM-IV Narcissistic Personality Disorder interview ratings, indicating a reasonably strong convergent validity. In other words, the NPI assessment of narcissism seems to be relevant for understanding the pathological variants of narcissism. In a similar vein, just because someone scores high on the self-report psychopathy scale does not necessarily mean that the individual will meet the diagnostic criteria for that personality disorder.

Again, if it is considered that people possess personality traits on a continuum, extremely high or extremely low levels of a trait can potentially be maladaptive (or not). In Study 3 of the current project, for instance, despite exhibiting behaviours that can be considered idiosyncratic or odd, the participants did not show any functional impairments. It is thus suggested that the Dark Triad should not be considered inherently psychopathological. It is also concurred that the NPI is indeed a useful measure despite its limitations, but the field would undoubtedly benefit from an inventory that has better psychometric properties. Ackerman et al. (2011) have proposed that instead of abandoning the measure, identifying and deconstructing the NPI items into meaningful subscales is probably a better solution. It is also worth noting that when understanding potentially

"abnormal" or maladaptive behaviour, an idiographic approach can be valuable, especially in applied clinical work.

Finally, it is undeniable that the use of a median-split has its limitations when it comes to measuring individual differences (MacCallum, Zhang, Preacher, & Rucker, 2002). The act of dichotomising variables that are inherently continuous simplifies information, and affects results of statistical analyses involving those variables (e.g., reduces power). It is especially problematic when personality traits are assumed to exist on a continuum. However, it was required in Study 1 for stimulus development, as well as to assess the differences in the most salient cues used by individuals high and low on the Dark Triad spectrum when they are assessing traits. It was also needed to examine differences in the way individuals describe manipulative behaviours, as shown in Study 2. As such, future work should consider applying standard methods of analysis on un-dichotomised measures.

**Beyond the Dark Triad**

There have been studies looking at examples of sadistic tendencies among those who are otherwise well-adjusted (e.g., Buckels, Trapnell, & Paulhus, 2014; Greitemeyer, 2015; Pfattheicher & Schindler, 2015). Given that 'everyday sadism' is a socially aversive trait that is present outside of clinical and forensic contexts, the literature on the Dark Triad can be advanced by including everyday sadism in future studies as a variable, expanding the Dark Triad to a 'Dark Tetrad' of personality. This can potentially inform research and policies on bullying, domestic violence, animal cruelty, and police brutality.

<div align="center">

**Conclusion**

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Even though the distinctiveness of the Dark Triad traits has been pointed out, it is recognised that some individuals possess more than one of the traits. Successful tyrants such as Hitler and Mao are likely among those who portray a combination of two or more of the Dark Triad traits; high levels of psychopathy can be inferred from the brutality carried out during their regimes, Machiavellianism facilitated their strategic manipulation of followers and the masses to bolster a powerful vision, and their narcissistic sense of supremacy justified their atrocities.

On a more mundane level of one-to-one interactions, social manipulation by Dark Triad individuals is prevalent in cases of domestic violence and abuse.

Undoubtedly the victims' reactions play an important part in maintaining, escalating, or stopping destructive behaviours. These important applications should be looked at in future research.

This piece of work on dark personalities and vulnerability demonstrates how one's traits, like every other thing in general, is a double-edged sword. The bottom line or concluding comment is that social situations play a role in promoting and maintaining harassment and victimisation. The findings of the current research indicate that social manipulation is an interactional phenomenon involving the destructive Dark Triad individual, individuals who enable and abet the destructive behaviours, and bystanders.

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**Published Material Associated with Studies within Thesis**

Chung, K., Charles, K., & Willis, A. (2015, March). *Why we love toxic people: Perceptions of those with destructive behaviours.* University of Dundee Scottish Student Forensic Research Symposium, Dundee. (Awarded Best Poster Presentation)

# Why We Love Toxic People: Perceptions of those with Destructive Behaviours

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## Background

The concept of leadership is often associated with positive outcomes, and leaders have always been thought to possess particular heroic characteristics.

Recently, researchers have looked into the dark side of leadership, in which the term 'toxic' and other negative labels (e.g. destructive, evil, derailment, abusive, bully) are used to describe this dark side. Such undesirable characteristics are often associated with people with Dark Triad (DT) traits, namely Psychopathy, Narcissism, and Machiavellianism.

In reality people favour toxic leaders as they have the ability to captivate followers. Research on interpersonal relationship has also shown that women tend to fall for "bad men". Toxic people exist because others enable them.

Certain traits are predictive of vulnerability in people who fall victim to manipulation. This study aims to determine the characteristics of those who enable Dark Triad individuals, as well as to explore the processes and mechanisms within these enablers.

## Materials and Methods

Vulnerability Scale (VS) is an adapted scale which encompasses two main dimensions: credulity and gullibility. Items reflecting bullying or harassment behaviours have been added for this study. Big Five Inventory (BFI) measures the five domains of personality: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness.

Participants completed the VS and BFI. After ranking them according to their VS scores, the top 30 and bottom 30 participants were invited to take part in a vignette study. Five vignettes portraying different scenarios involving characters high on the DT traits and their victims of manipulation were presented. Each vignette contains Likert-type questions and open-ended questions.

## Results

Cronbach's alpha for the 20-item VS was .80.

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

| | Mean | S.D. | VS | BFIE | BFIA | BFIC | BFIN | BFIO |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| VS | 48.01 | 11.54 | 1.00 | | | | | |
| BFIE | 3.11 | .94 | -.23* | 1.00 | | | | |
| BFIA | 3.55 | .73 | .18* | .17 | 1.00 | | | |
| BFIC | 3.42 | .68 | -.32** | .22* | .19* | 1.00 | | |
| BFIN | 3.09 | .83 | .35** | -.33** | -.11 | -.44** | 1.00 | |
| BFIO | 3.58 | .64 | -.06 | .09 | .10 | .06 | .08 | 1.00 |

Note. *p < .05, **p < .01

Total vulnerability scores showed significant negative correlations with Extraversion and Conscientiousness.

Total vulnerability scores showed a significant positive correlation with Agreeableness and Neuroticism.

### Vignette 1, 3, 4, and 5:

A Mann-Whitney test showed that the **low vulnerability group agrees more strongly that the DT character is responsible for his/her actions** as compared to the high vulnerability group

Vignette 1: $U = 283$, $p = .005$    Vignette 3: $U = 271$, $p = .003$
Vignette 4: $U = 293.50$, $p = .01$    Vignette 5: $U = 299$, $p = .02$

### Vignette 2:

The **low vulnerability group disagrees more strongly that the victim is responsible for his action**, $U = 322$, $p = .05$.

A chi-square test of association showed that there was a significant relation between vulnerability and character identification, $\chi^2 (1, n = 60) = 5.46$, $p = .02$. **The high vulnerability group is more likely to identify with the DT character.**

Which character do you most identify with?

DT  Individual  Victim

### Vignette 3:

The **low vulnerability group disagrees more strongly that there are good reasons to rationalise and tolerate the DT character's behaviour**, $U = 285$, $p = .01$.

Which character do you most identify with?

### Vignette 4:

More participants identify with the female DT character, particularly when the male victim has demonstrated infidelity in another relationship.

DT  V

### Vignette 5:

The **low vulnerability group agrees more strongly that the DT character should change her behaviour**, $U = 325.50$, $p = .04$.

## Discussions and Conclusions

People who are less vulnerable are more assertive in expressing their opinions; they tend to be significantly more affirmative (or negative) and are likely to select the extreme choice – *strongly agree* or *strongly disagree* – as compared to more vulnerable people.

More vulnerable people identify with DT characters. Low conscientiousness is associated with environmental stressors, e.g. less successful careers, poor marital adjustment, and the inability to make decisions at work. Conscientiousness is associated with morality; vulnerable people may have blurred personal and moral boundaries, which could also possibly lead them to believe that the manipulator has some understandable reasons to be hurtful.

It is generally agreed that infidelity is unacceptable, hence people seem to look past the unpleasant behaviours and identify with the DT person as they cannot justify the victim's marital unfaithfulness. In conclusion, the milder response style on the Likert scale (neutral option) of more vulnerable people and their identification with DT characteristics may reflect a soften moral judgement and identity.

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## Further information

If you are interested in taking part, please visit:
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# Giving the benefit of the doubt: The role of vulnerability in the perception of Dark Triad behaviours

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ABSTRACT

The 'Dark Triad' of socially aversive personality traits (Machiavellianism, Narcissism, and Psychopathy) is typically associated with grandiosity, callousness, and exploitation. Despite this, people with such traits can be very successful in life, especially in the occupational context. This study investigated the characteristics of individuals who enable and abet people high on Dark Triad traits (e.g. through tolerating unpleasant behaviours, not challenging unethical conduct, etc.). High Dark Triad individuals may be able to identify individuals who are susceptible to social manipulation and who are therefore less likely to challenge their behaviours. This study used a 20-item Vulnerability Scale to capture the characteristics of individuals who fall victim to people high on the Dark Triad traits. Cronbach's alpha for the Vulnerability Scale was 0.80. Pearson's correlation between total vulnerability scores and each of the Big Five personality traits revealed that predictors of vulnerability to social manipulation include low extraversion, low conscientiousness, high neuroticism, and high agreeableness. The vignette method was used to elicit perceptions of Dark Triad behaviours from those who are found to demonstrate signs of social vulnerability. Differences in response styles on Likert-type statements and open-ended questions were found between the high and low vulnerability groups.

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## 1. Introduction

The Dark Triad (DT) refers to a set of conceptually distinct but empirically overlapping personality constructs – Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Underlying these traits are socially aversive behaviours such as self-centeredness, manipulation, and control (Lee & Ashton, 2005). Machiavellianism is characterised by insincerity, deceitfulness, and cold-heartedness. Machiavellians are "pragmatists" who are willing to depart from ethical standards to pursue self-interests realistically (Christie & Geis, 1970; Jones & Paulhus, 2009). Individuals with higher levels of psychopathy exhibit high impulsivity, emotional coldness, and low empathy (Salekin, Leistico, & Mullins-Nelson, 2006). Narcissism at a subclinical level presents as self-centeredness, a constant need for admiration, and a sense of entitlement (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001).

## 2. The allure of destructive people

'Leadership' can evoke heroic representations of renowned leaders (Ashby & Miles, 2002; Bligh & Kohles, 2009). However, recent years have seen a growing body of research on the dark side of leadership (Jonason, Slomski & Partyka, 2012; Pelletier, 2010), in which negative labels are commonly used, e.g. destructive, evil, bad, abusive, bullying – terms associated with people with DT personalities. National leaders such as Hitler, Mao, and Stalin were destructive tyrants responsible for the death of millions but, by their own terms, their regimes were successful in some of their political, economic, and social aims, and they continue to have adherents who see them as national heroes (e.g. Lipman, Gudkov, & Bakradze, 2013; Waldron, 2005). Lipman-Blumen (2004) proposed that people may not merely endure such people – they may favour, and sometimes even create destructive leaders. Leaders exhibiting DT behaviours may exercise dictatorial control over others because people have certain psychological needs which these destructive leaders are able to exploit. Lipman-Blumen (2005) reasoned that humans can be susceptible to grand illusions, and sometimes followers can be captivated by leaders who deliver visions exploiting that susceptibility.

Despite their generally aversive nature, DT traits may be desirable under some circumstances as they have been associated with sought-after characteristics such as charisma, boldness, and impression-management abilities (Ames, 2009; Paunonen, Lönnqvist, Verkasalo, Leikas, & Nissinen, 2006). Leaders who are assertive and dominant can be valued by organisations for their ruthlessness, especially in turbulent times (Van Vugt & Ahuja, 2010). DT traits can be adaptive, if 'adaptive' is furthering organisational goals ahead of any concern for their negative collateral effects. People with such traits may also thrive in the

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entertainment industry (Young & Pinsky, 2006) and be sexually 'successful' (Jonason, Li, Webster, & Schmitt, 2009).

Victims of psychopathy have suggested that affinity groups such as religious or support groups attract psychopaths because members often possess virtues such as acceptance of newcomers from diverse backgrounds and the willingness to forgive past wrongdoings (Aftermath: Surviving Psychopathy Foundation, 2011). Victims have also observed that the structure of many religious institutions places spiritual leaders in positions of power, allowing these sometimes psychopathic individuals to use the organisation to prey on the vulnerable.

### 3. Traits predictive of vulnerability

There have been few attempts to operationalise vulnerability (Dussich, 2006; Sparks, 1981). Within the literature on bullying, vulnerability can be understood as being susceptible to physical or psychological harm (Olweus, 1993a). Some studies have tended to focus on age and gender as proxies for vulnerability (Crick & Bigbee, 1998; Kim & Geistfeld, 2008), but research looking into violent crimes has indicated that victims have been targeted because they displayed other signs of vulnerability, e.g. walking style (Book, Costello, & Camilleri, 2013; Gunns, Johnston, & Hudson, 2002; see also Book, Volk, & Hosker, 2012; Naylor, Cowie, Cossins, de Bettencourt, & Lemme, 2006).

Symptoms of depression, low self-regard, social withdrawal, gullibility, readiness to trust others, and low assertiveness are some of the characteristics commonly associated with vulnerability to victimisation (D'Esposito, Blake, & Riccio, 2011; Hawker & Boulton, 2000). Anxious children have been known to be submissive and less likely to retaliate when assaulted (Olweus, 1995; Shorey et al., 2011). These characteristics are presented as outcomes of harassment, and are said to reinforce and attract further attacks against the victims, i.e. a cycle of vulnerability develops (Rubin, Coplan, & Bowker, 2009). The negative consequences of having been harassed as a child may continue into adulthood. Olweus (1993a, 1993b) reported a significant relationship between the degree of adult depressive symptoms and the severity of childhood victimisation. It appears, therefore, that displaying such vulnerabilities can affect people's interpersonal relationships in adulthood, putting them at risk of victimisation by social predators in intimate and/or workplace relationships. Bandura (2002) and Zimbardo (2004) suggest that people may develop an inclination for immoral behaviours when placed in institutional climates that encourage its practice; there may be a two-way relationship between the individual with DT traits and the person on the receiving end of their behaviour.

The present study sought to determine the traits of individuals who may unwittingly enable people high on DT traits, as well as examining the perceptions of these 'enablers'. In light of the bullying and work harassment literature, it is hypothesised that low extraversion, high agreeableness, high conscientiousness, high neuroticism, and low openness are predictors of vulnerability to interpersonal manipulation. Given that people who possess high levels of the DT qualities are skilled when it comes to taking advantage of their targets' desires and fears, it must be noted that destructive individuals cannot exist without the enablers' compliance. This interaction was explored using vignettes. In response to vignettes depicting interpersonal exploitation, it is anticipated that vulnerable individuals will perceive characters in the vignettes differently from those who are less vulnerable, as measured by their ratings on a series of Likert-type statements. Vulnerable people are also expected to identify with the victimised characters in the vignettes.

### 4. Method

#### 4.1. Participants

Sixty participants (17 males, 43 females) were purposely selected from a sample of 144 participants (40 males, 104 females) who completed the Vulnerability Scale and Big Five Inventory. Of the 60 participants, 40 (66.7%) were aged between 21 to 30 years, six (10%) between 31 to 40 years, five (8.3%) between 41 to 50 years, six (10%) were 51 or over, while only three (5%) were between 18 to 20 years. Participants were recruited online through Psychology research websites and from Edinburgh Napier University.

#### 4.2. Materials

##### 4.2.1. Vulnerability Scale (VS)

The VS was adapted from the Social Vulnerability Scale (Pinsker, Stone, Pachana, & Greenspan, 2006), a scale which includes two main factors: credulity and gullibility. Credulous and gullible behaviours are thought to encourage social exploitation from manipulators (Greenspan, Loughlin, & Black, 2001). DT constructs also yield significant links to social manipulation behaviours (Baughman, Dearing, Giammarco, & Vernon, 2012). This 20-item questionnaire aimed to capture the characteristics of individuals who fall victim to people high on the DT traits. Premised on the literature discussed above, vulnerability to exploitation in the present study was defined as *a physical, psychological, or social condition whereby a person fails to detect or avoid potentially harmful interpersonal interactions.*

The original Social Vulnerability Scale was used with older adults and designed as an informant-based behaviour rating scale, with a focus on acts of financial exploitation. For the current study, the scale was modified to a self-report measure. Some items of a financial nature were removed (e.g. *How often has he/she been persuaded to purchase unneeded products or services*) and some items were revised to reflect general harassment behaviours and to be more applicable to a wider population (e.g. *I am frequently subjected to nit-picking and trivial fault-finding, I will retaliate if I am a target of offensive and inappropriate language*). Respondents rated to what extent each statement describes them on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very untrue of me) to 5 (very true of me). Possible scores range from 20 to 100. Higher scores reflect higher levels of vulnerability to exploitation. Cronbach's alpha for the VS ($N = 144$) is 0.80, indicating a good internal consistency of the items in the scale (George & Mallery, 2003).

##### 4.2.2. Big Five Inventory (BFI)

The BFI is a 44-item questionnaire that measures the five domains of personality (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness). In previous studies, the BFI has reported good reliability, a clear factor structure, strong convergence with other Big Five measures, and significant self-peer agreement (Benet-Martínez & John, 1998; John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008; Soto, John, Gosling, & Potter, 2008).

##### 4.2.3. Vignettes

Five case stories were constructed, each depicting one character with high levels of DT traits along with his/her victim of manipulation. To avoid gender bias, both males and females represented DT characters and victims across the vignettes. There were three male and two female DT characters, along with two male and three female victims. The vignettes were selected and adapted from real-life cases found in public forums and articles. The vignettes were revised several times, drawing upon literature and case study materials in order to establish internal validity. Vignettes have been regarded as robust means of exploring sensitive topics, as they allow individuals some detachment (Hughes, 1998).

Each vignette contained eight 5-point Likert-type statements, with scales running from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree):

1. *Victim* is fully responsible for how *DT character* has been treating him/her.
2. *DT character* is fully responsible for how he/she has been treating *Victim*.

3. The ways in which *Victim* reacted to *DT character*'s behaviour were understandable.
4. There are good reasons to rationalise and tolerate *DT character*'s behaviour.
5. *Victim* should change his/her behaviour.
6. *DT character* should change his/her behaviour.
7. If given a chance, *Victim* can make an effort to change his/her behaviour.
8. If given a chance, *DT character* can make an effort to change his/her behaviour.

Three open-ended questions were included:
1. What are your impressions of *DT character*?
2. What are your impressions of *Victim*?
3. Which character in the story do you most identify with, and why?

### 4.3. Procedure

Informed consent was obtained. Participants completed the VS and the BFI. After ranking participants ($N = 144$) according to their VS scores from the highest to the lowest ($M = 47.69$, $SD = 11.22$, range 21–81), the top 30 participants (high vulnerability group) and bottom 30 participants (low vulnerability group) were invited to take part in a vignette-based study. An independent-samples *t*-test confirmed that there was a significant difference in the VS scores between high ($M = 57.90$, $SD = 6.48$) and low ($M = 35.67$, $SD = 5.54$) vulnerability groups, $t(58) = -14.29$, $p < 0.001$.

### 5. Results

#### 5.1. VS and BFI

As presented in Table 1, total vulnerability scores ($M = 47.69$, $SD = 11.22$) showed significant positive correlations with Agreeableness ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 0.71$), $r(142) = 0.19$, $p < 0.05$, and Neuroticism ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 0.83$), $r(142) = 0.26$, $p < 0.01$. Vulnerability scores also showed significant negative correlations with Extraversion ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 0.92$), $r(142) = -0.19$, $p < 0.05$, and Conscientiousness ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 0.67$), $r(142) = -0.24$, $p < 0.01$.

#### 5.2. Vignettes

##### 5.2.1. Likert-type statements
Individual Likert items were ordinal-scale and hence were analysed using nonparametric tests.

*5.2.1.1. Vignettes 1, 3, 4, and 5.* A Mann-Whitney *U* test showed that the low vulnerability group agrees more strongly that the DT character is responsible for his/her actions as compared to the high vulnerability group, with $U = 297.50$, $p = 0.01$ for Vignette 1; $U = 277.50$, $p = 0.004$ for Vignette 3; $U = 267$, $p = 0.004$ for Vignette 4; and $U = 307.50$, $p = 0.02$ for Vignette 5.

*5.2.1.2. Vignette 2.* The low vulnerability group disagrees more strongly that the victim is responsible for his actions, $U = 311$, $p = 0.03$. A chi-square test of association found a significant relation between vulnerability and character identification, $\chi^2(1, n = 60) = 5.46$, $p = 0.02$, $\phi = 0.3$. The high vulnerability group is more likely to identify with the DT character, where participants from the high vulnerability group comprise 81.8% of those who identify with the DT character as compared to only 18.2% from the low vulnerability group.

*5.2.1.3. Vignette 3.* The low vulnerability group disagrees more strongly that there are good reasons to rationalise and tolerate the DT character's behaviour, $U = 306$, $p = 0.04$.

*5.2.1.4. Vignette 4.* As a whole, 43.3% of participants identify with the DT character, whilst only about 20% of participants identify with the DT character in Vignettes 1, 2, 3, and 5. The presence of infidelity in the victim's behaviour appears to have had an influence on which character participants identify with. The low vulnerability group disagrees more strongly that how the victim reacted to DT character's behaviour was understandable, $U = 327.50$, $p = 0.05$, disagrees more strongly that there are good reasons to rationalise and tolerate the DT character's behaviour, $U = 296$, $p = 0.02$, and agrees more strongly that the victim should change his behaviour, $U = 327.50$, $p = 0.05$.

*5.2.1.5. Vignette 5.* The low vulnerability group agrees more strongly that the DT character should change her behaviour, $U = 313.50$, $p = 0.03$.

##### 5.2.2. Open-ended questions
The responses for the open-ended questions were analysed by means of text analysis. Words and phrases with similar meaning were coded into the same category (e.g. "psychopath", "sociopath", "narcissist" were coded as personality disorder) to represent a common theme. Neuendorf (2002) stated that this systematic form of data extraction focuses on linking frequency counts of apparent features (positive/negative keywords) to clusters of characteristics (general impressions).

Tables 2 and 3 show the themes that emerge based on the most frequently used descriptions employed by high and low vulnerability groups with regard to the DT characters and Victims, along with sample phrases to illustrate the written responses. Overall, both high and low vulnerability groups viewed the perpetrators negatively, employing words such as irresponsible, selfish, manipulative, whilst acknowledging that the victims were being victimised. However, there is a difference in the way both characters were described: the low vulnerability group were more derogatory, whereas the high vulnerability group were less harsh.

### 6. Discussion

#### 6.1. Vulnerability and the Big Five

The correlations between vulnerability scores and personality traits were consistent with the bullying literature. In the current study, high

**Table 1**
Mean, standard deviation and Pearson's correlation between Vulnerability Scale scores and the five personality domains of the Big Five Inventory ($N = 144$).

| | M | SD | Correlation matrix | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | | V | E | A | C | N | O |
| Vulnerability (V) | 47.69 | 11.22 | | | | | | |
| Extraversion (E) | 3.07 | 0.92 | −0.19[*] | | | | | |
| Agreeableness (A) | 3.52 | 0.71 | 0.19[*] | 0.13 | | | | |
| Conscientiousness (C) | 3.38 | 0.67 | −0.24[**] | 0.25[**] | 0.19[*] | | | |
| Neuroticism (N) | 3.10 | 0.83 | 0.26[**] | −0.31[**] | −0.13 | −0.44[**] | | |
| Openness (O) | 3.62 | 0.62 | −0.06 | 0.07 | 0.04 | 0.01 | 0.10 | |

[*] $p < 0.05$.
[**] $p < 0.01$.

**Table 2**
Themes that emerged based on occurrences of words and phrases used to describe DT character by high and low vulnerability groups, with example phrases.

| Themes | Example sentences |
| --- | --- |
| *Low vulnerability* | |
| Personality disorder | "*He is clearly a sociopath*" |
| Will never change | "*He will never change, is parasitic and blames everyone else for whatever happens to him*" |
| Derogatory descriptions | "*A total douchebag*" |
| Typical | "*He's also a typical lecher who would sweet-talk and use his position to lure women*" |
| | |
| *High vulnerability* | |
| Opportunist/go-getter | "*Does what he needs to get where he wants to get to*" |
| Successful/effective | "*A man of prestige and influence*" |
| Intelligent | "*She's smart to use her own advantage to benefit herself*" |
| Problems stem from childhood | "*Must have had unhappy childhood*" |

neuroticism and agreeableness scores were predictors of vulnerability. Victims of bullying have been found to score higher on neuroticism (Georgesen, Harris, Milich, & Young, 1999; Tani, Greenman, Schneider, & Fregoso, 2003). This is in accordance with the view that victims exhibit higher levels of distress and negative affect (Perry, Hodges, & Egan, 2001), which in turn reinforces further victimisation. Those higher on agreeableness are less likely to behave aggressively or retaliate (Gleason, Jensen-Campbell, & Richardson, 2004). They are also more trusting of others and perceive others positively (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001). Although agreeableness is linked to positive interpersonal relationships, high agreeableness may be one of the reasons people fall victim to DT individuals, as highly agreeable people are more forgiving and tend to react to hostility in a more temperate manner (Smart Richman & Leary, 2009). Low extraversion scores amongst the high vulnerability group were consistent with previous research reporting victims of bullying to be less extraverted (Coyne, Seigne, & Randall, 2000; Glasø, Matthiesen, Nielsen, & Einarsen, 2007; Mynard & Joseph, 1997). Introverts will tend to be more isolated and less assertive and more likely to be targeted as a result.

Studies have found high conscientiousness to be antecedents of workplace bullying (Lind, Glasø, Pallesen, & Einarsen, 2009). Zapf and Einarsen (2003) suggested that highly conscientious individuals are overachievers who are more rigid and literal-minded, and with such qualities they are more likely to incite others' aggression. In the present study, however, the high vulnerability group reported significantly lower conscientiousness scores. Bollmer, Harris, and Milich (2006) argued that those who are more conscientious are more determined, making them better able to ward off potential threats by perpetrators. Furthermore, lower conscientiousness is associated with greater anger and negative effect in peer conflicts. People high on neuroticism and low on conscientiousness may have difficulty regulating their behaviour during conflict situations.

The results indicate that people who are vulnerable to victimisation should not be viewed as homogeneous and undifferentiated. There are

**Table 3**
Themes that emerged based on occurrences of words and phrases used to describe Victim by high and low vulnerability groups, with example phrases.

| Themes | Example sentences |
| --- | --- |
| *Low Vulnerability* | |
| Naïve | "*Naïve, easily convinced*" |
| Weak/Does not take a stand | "*Her soft and weak attitude would hinder her wellbeing*" |
| | |
| *High vulnerability* | |
| People pleaser | "*She feels responsible for everyone being happy*" |
| Blinded by love | "*Too deep in love*" |

different ways in which personality factors may be associated with vulnerability.

*6.2. Response styles and identification with characters*

The present findings show differences in the responses to the Likert-type statements between the high and low vulnerability groups. Across all vignettes, the less vulnerable were more assertive in their opinions; they were more affirmative (or negative) and more likely to select the extreme option (i.e., strongly agree or strongly disagree). In contrast, vulnerable people had a milder response style and their responses clustered around neutral. The high vulnerability group identified with the DT character in one of the vignettes, contrary to the study's prediction. As conscientiousness is associated with morality, such tendencies may suggest that vulnerable people possess blurred or uncertain personal and moral boundaries, which possibly lead them to believe that the manipulator has some understandable reasons to be unpleasant.

Researchers have attempted to explain why people identify with literary characters, which occurs frequently when one is reading a book or story. According to Kaufman and Libby (2012), people are inclined to engage in a phenomenon termed "experience-taking", in which they subconsciously take on the behaviours, internal thoughts, emotions, and feelings of fictional characters they relate to. This is said to be immersive; readers forget themselves and identify with the character. In the present study, vulnerable people perceived the DT character in Vignette 2 in socially desirable ways such as confident and dominant. On one hand, the DT traits may represent an evolutionarily successful strategy (Jonason, Webster, Schmitt, Li, & Crysel, 2012), and these traits appear desirable at first glance. On the other hand, it can be argued that vulnerable people aspire to such traits. Experience-taking allows them temporarily to forget themselves and their own self-concept, with which they may be dissatisfied.

In the situation where a male victim encounters a female DT character as illustrated in Vignette 4, more than one-third of participants in the second phase identified with the DT character. The vignette portrayed the male victim as behaving in a morally questionable way by having an extramarital affair with the DT character. It is generally agreed that infidelity involves a breach of trust and is unattractive (Mileham, 2007), thus people seem to be able to look past the unpleasant behaviours and identify with the DT individual, as they cannot justify the victim's marital unfaithfulness. Bartels (2008) argued that people are highly driven to abide by their moral beliefs in their judgements and choices, however these belief systems are flexible and complicated. Paradoxically, despite considering morality as rigid and objective, moral judgement processes are highly context-sensitive (Bartels, Bauman, Cushman, Pizarro, & McGraw, 2015). The present findings reinforce this view that nuanced influences are involved in these judgements, and that people, particularly those who are more vulnerable, tend not to evaluate the roles of the aggressor and the victim in isolation.

**7. Limitations**

The vignettes in this study were developed through adapting scenarios based on real-life situations, underpinned by theoretical concepts of perceptions of DT and vulnerability. A main limitation is the validation of scenarios in the vignettes. External validation to examine how the responses on hypothetical situations reflect people's actual behaviour when making similar decisions under real-world conditions would have been valuable. Therefore, another avenue for future research may be to compare the results obtained using these vignettes to results from other objective measures in order to assess internal consistency.

**8. Conclusion**

The Vulnerability Scale developed for this study shows good alpha reliability and the items correlate as one would expect with the five

personality dimensions. The scale may be useful in providing a better understanding of vulnerability and the psychological mechanisms underlying it. It may also help in identifying those who are susceptible to manipulation.

Vulnerable individuals seem to be less certain when responding to Likert‐type statements and possibly see grey areas in DT behaviours, whereas less vulnerable individuals perceive more readily that DT personalities are detrimental. It seems a paradox remains – whilst people complain about malevolent individuals, victims of such people may have a tendency to excuse them.

## Acknowledgements

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**Appendices**

**Appendix 1**

**Information Sheet and Consent Form for Dark Triad Sample (Initial Phase)**



**Participant Information Sheet**

<span style="color:red">**Title of the project: Accuracy in judging personality traits and assessing vulnerability**</span>

My name is Kai Li Chung and I am a postgraduate research student from the School of Life, Sport, and Social Sciences at Edinburgh Napier University. As part of my PhD course, I am undertaking a research project for my thesis. You are being invited to participate in this research project. Before deciding to take part, please take the time to read the following carefully.

This is a piece of research on personality. We are interested in looking at the influence of individual differences on the accuracy of judging personality traits and assessing vulnerability. The findings of this research will be useful, as they will aid our understanding of the dynamics in interpersonal relationships.

We are looking for volunteers to participate in the project. You are welcome to take part if you are aged 18 or over and are able to speak English fluently.

This study involves two phases. Today you are asked to take part in phase 1 of the study where you will be filling out three questionnaires. Your responses will be scored along with responses given by other participants. On the basis of the scores you may be asked to participate in phase 2 which will take place within the Edinburgh Napier University Sighthill Campus at a time that is convenient for you. If you are asked you will be invited via the e-mail address that you provide in phase 1. In phase 2, you will be asked to either take part in an interview, or watch a set of video clips and complete questionnaires. Participation in phase 2 of this study will take approximately 60 minutes in total.

We are not aware of any risks associated with taking part in this project. You are free to withdraw from the study at any stage without having to provide reasons for doing so and without any consequences.

To ensure confidentiality, all data provided will be securely stored in a secure filing cabinet and on computers that are password protected, to which only I and the Director of Study, Dr Kathy Charles, have access. These will be kept till the end of the research project, following which all data will be destroyed. You may withdraw your data from the project at any time up until 1ˢᵗ January 2015 after which time it will have been included in the anonymous analysis and so will no longer be traceable.

The information from this project will be used for the write-up of my thesis. The results may also be published in a journal or presented at a conference.

This research is being funded by Edinburgh Napier University.

Thank you for reading this information – please ask any questions if you are unsure about what is written here.

If you have read and understood this information sheet, any questions you had have been answered, and you would like to continue and be involved in this project, you will first be asked to sign a consent form to confirm this. You will then complete the questionnaires in phase 1. Depending on your score on these questionnaires you may be invited to take part in phase 2 of this study.

If you do not wish to be involved in this project, thank you very much for your time and attention.

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Dr Kathy Charles
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E-mail: k.charles@napier.ac.uk

If you have any questions/concerns, during or after the investigation, or would like to contact an independent person who knows about this project but is not involved in it, you are welcome to contact:

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E-mail: p.laybourn@napier.ac.uk

**<u>Consent Form</u>**

**Title of the project: Accuracy in judging personality traits and assessing vulnerability**

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above project and I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation.

I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this study and that I have the right to withdraw from the project at any time, without having to give a reason and without any consequences.

I understand that I can withdraw my data from the project at any time up until $1^{st}$ January 2015.

I understand that any information recorded in the investigation will remain confidential and no information that identifies me will be made publicly available.

I certify that I am 18 years old or older, and I consent to being a participant in this project.


Name of participant        :        _____
                                                    (PRINT NAME)


Signature of participant    :        _____


Date                                  :        _____

## Appendix 1.1

**MACH-IV**

Please circle *one* number to indicate the extent to which each of the following statement accurately describes you.

| To what extent does each statement describe me? | Strongly disagree | Disagree | No opinion | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Never tell anyone the real reason you did something unless it is useful to do so. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. The best way to handle people is to tell them what they want to hear. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. One should take action only when sure it is morally right. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Most people are basically good and kind. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. It is safest to assume that all people have a vicious streak and it will come out when they are given a chance. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Honesty is the best policy in all cases. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. There is no excuse for lying to someone else. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Generally speaking people won't work hard unless they are forced to do so. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. All in all it is better to be humble and honest than to be important and dishonest. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. When you ask someone to do something for you it is best to give the real reasons for wanting it rather than giving reasons which carry more weight. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. Most people who get ahead in the world lead clean moral lives. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. Anyone who completely trusts anyone else is asking for trouble. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| To what extent does each statement describe me? | Strongly disagree | Disagree | No opinion | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13. The biggest difference between most criminals and other people is that criminals are stupid enough to get caught. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. Most people are brave. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. It is wise to flatter important people. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. It is possible to be good in all respects. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. P. T. Barnum was wrong when he said "there's a sucker born every minute". | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. It is hard to get ahead without cutting corners here and there. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. People suffering from incurable diseases should have the choice of being put painlessly to death. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. Most people forget more easily the death of their parents than the loss of their property. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**Appendix 1.2**

**Self-Report Psychopathy – Fourth Edition (SRP 4)**

*Note:* In compliance with terms and conditions of use, only six items are shown in this thesis.

Please rate the degree to which you agree with the following statements about you.

| | | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8. | I purposely flatter people to get them on my side. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 27. | It's fun to see how far you can push people before they get upset. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 35. | You should take advantage of other people before they do it to you. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 49. | I was convicted of a serious crime. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 51. | I keep getting in trouble for the same things over and over. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 53. | People cry way too much at funerals. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**Appendix 1.3**

**Narcissism Personality Inventory (NPI-40)**

For each of the following pair of statements, circle *one* option (letter A *or* B) that comes closest to your own feelings and beliefs about yourself. If you identify with both statements equally, or if you do not identify with either statement, choose the one that is closer to your own feelings and beliefs.

1.  A    I have a natural talent for influencing people.

    B    I am not good at influencing people.

2.  A    Modesty doesn't become me.

    B    I am essentially a modest person.

3.  A    I would do almost anything on a dare.

    B    I tend to be a fairly cautious person.

4.  A    When people compliment me I sometimes get embarrassed.

    B    I know that I am good because everybody keeps telling me so.

5.  A    The thought of ruling the world frightens the hell out of me.

    B    If I ruled the world it would be a better place.

6.  A    I can usually talk my way out of anything.

    B    I try to accept the consequences of my behaviour.

7.  A    I prefer to blend in with the crowd.

    B    I like to be the centre of attention.

8.  A    I will be a success.

    B    I am not too concerned about success.

9.  A    I am no better or worse than most people.

    B    I think I am a special person.

10. A    I am not sure if I would make a good leader.

    B    I see myself as a good leader.

11. A    I am assertive.

    B    I wish I were more assertive.

12. A    I like to have authority over other people.

    B    I don't mind following orders.

13.     A        I find it easy to manipulate people.

            B        I don't like it when I find myself manipulating people.

14.     A        I insist upon getting the respect that is due me.

            B        I usually get the respect that I deserve.

15.     A        I don't particularly like to show off my body.

            B        I like to show off my body.

16.     A        I can read people like a book.

            B        People are sometimes hard to understand.

17.     A        If I feel competent I am willing to take responsibility for making decisions.

            B        I like to take responsibility for making decisions.

18.     A        I just want to be reasonably happy.

            B        I want to amount to something in the eyes of the world.

19.     A        My body is nothing special.

            B        I like to look at my body.

20.     A        I try not to be a show off.

            B        I will usually show off if I get the chance.

21.     A        I always know what I am doing.

            B        Sometimes I am not sure of what I am doing.

22.     A        I sometimes depend on people to get things done.

            B        I rarely depend on anyone else to get things done.

23.     A        Sometimes I tell good stories.

            B        Everybody likes to hear my stories.

24.     A        I expect a great deal from other people.

            B        I like to do things for other people.

25.     A        I will never be satisfied until I get all that I deserve.

            B        I take my satisfactions as they come.

26.     A        Compliments embarrass me.

            B        I like to be complimented.

27.   A   I have a strong will to power.

      B   Power for its own sake doesn't interest me.


28.   A   I don't care about new fads and fashions.

      B   I like to start new fads and fashions.


29.   A   I like to look at myself in the mirror.

      B   I am not particularly interested in looking at myself in the mirror.


30.   A   I really like to be the centre of attention.

      B   It makes me uncomfortable to be the centre of attention.


31.   A   I can live my life in any way I want to.

      B   People can't always live their lives in terms of what they want.


32.   A   Being an authority doesn't mean that much to me.

      B   People always seem to recognize my authority.


33.   A   I would prefer to be a leader.

      B   It makes little difference to me whether I am a leader or not.


34.   A   I am going to be a great person.

      B   I hope I am going to be successful.


35.   A   People sometimes believe what I tell them.

      B   I can make anybody believe anything I want them to.


36.   A   I am a born leader.

      B   Leadership is a quality that takes a long time to develop.


37.   A   I wish somebody would someday write my biography.

      B   I don't like people to pry into my life for any reason.


38.   A   I get upset when people don't notice how I look when I go out in public.

      B   I don't mind blending into the crowd when I go out in public.


39.   A   I am more capable than other people.

      B   There is a lot that I can learn from other people.


40.   A   I am much like everybody else.

      B   I am an extraordinary person.

**Appendix 2**

**Information Sheet and Consent Form for Vulnerability Sample (Initial Phase)**



**Participant Information Sheet**

**Title of the project: The perception of interpersonal behaviour**

My name is Kai Li Chung and I am a postgraduate research student from the School of Life, Sport, and Social Sciences at Edinburgh Napier University. As part of my PhD course, I am undertaking a research project for my thesis. You are being invited to participate in this research project. Before deciding to take part, please take the time to read the following carefully.

This is a piece of research on perception and personality. We are interested in looking at the influence of individual differences on the perception of interpersonal behaviour. The findings of this research will be useful, as they will aid our understanding of the dynamics in interpersonal relationships.

We are looking for volunteers to participate in the project. You are welcome to take part if you are aged 18 or over and are able to speak English fluently.

This study involves two phases. Today you are asked to take part in phase 1 of the study where you will be filling out two questionnaires. Your responses will be scored along with responses given by other participants. On the basis of the scores you may be asked to participate in phase 2 which will take place within the Edinburgh Napier University Sighthill Campus at a time that is convenient for you. If you are asked you will be invited via the e-mail address that you provide in phase 1. In phase 2, you will be asked to either take part in a recorded discussion, or to read five short stories and complete questionnaires. Participation in phase 2 of this study will take approximately 60 minutes in total.

We are not aware of any risks associated with taking part in this project. You are free to withdraw from the study at any stage without having to provide reasons for doing so and without any consequences.

To ensure confidentiality, all data provided will be securely stored in a secure filing cabinet and on computers that are password protected, to which only I and the Director of Study, Dr Kathy Charles, have access. These will be kept till the end of the research project, following which all data will be destroyed. You may withdraw your data from the project at any time up until 1ˢᵗ March 2016 after which time it will have been included in the anonymous analysis and so will no longer be traceable.

The information from this project will be used for the write-up of my thesis. The results may also be published in a journal or presented at a conference.

This research is being funded by Edinburgh Napier University.

Thank you for reading this information – please ask any questions if you are unsure about what is written here.

If you have read and understood this information sheet, any questions you had have been answered, and you would like to continue and be involved in this project, you will first be asked to sign a consent form to confirm this. You will then complete the questionnaires in phase 1. Depending on your score on these questionnaires you may be invited to take part in phase 2 of this study.

If you do not wish to be involved in this project, thank you very much for your time and attention.

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If you have any questions/concerns, during or after the investigation, or would like to contact an independent person who knows about this project but is not involved in it, you are welcome to contact:

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**Edinburgh Napier**
UNIVERSITY

**<u>Consent Form</u>**

**Title of the project: The perception of interpersonal behaviour**

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above project and I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation.

I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this study and that I have the right to withdraw from the project at any time, without having to give a reason and without any consequences.

I understand that I can withdraw my data from the project at any time up until 1st March 2016.

I understand that any information recorded in the investigation will remain confidential and no information that identifies me will be made publicly available.

I certify that I am 18 years old or older, and I consent to being a participant in this project.


Name of participant     :     _____
                                     (PRINT NAME)


Signature of participant     :     _____


Date     :     _____

**Appendix 2.1**

**Big Five Inventory**

The following statements concern your perception about yourself in a variety of situations. Please circle *one* number to indicate the strength of your agreement with each statement. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers, so select the number that most closely reflects you on each statement. Take your time and consider each statement carefully.

| I see myself as someone who… | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither disagree nor agree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.  Is talkative | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2.  Tends to find fault with others | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3.  Does a thorough job | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4.  Is depressed, blue | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5.  Is original, comes up with new ideas | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6.  Is reserved | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.  Is helpful and unselfish with others | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8.  Can be somewhat careless | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9.  Is relaxed, handles stress well | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Is curious about many different things | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. Is full of energy | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. Starts quarrels with others | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. Is a reliable worker | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. Can be tense | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. Is ingenious, a deep thinker | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. Generates a lot of enthusiasm | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. Has a forgiving nature | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. Tends to be disorganized | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. Worries a lot | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. Has an active imagination | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| I see myself as someone who… | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither disagree nor agree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 21. Tends to be quiet | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. Is generally trusting | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. Tends to be lazy | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. Is emotionally stable, not easily upset | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. Is inventive | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 26. Has an assertive personality | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 27. Can be cold and aloof | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 28. Perseveres until the task is finished | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29. Can be moody | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 30. Values artistic, aesthetic experiences | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 31. Is sometimes shy, inhibited | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 32. Is considerate and kind to almost everyone | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 33. Does things efficiently | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 34. Remains calm in tense situations | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 35. Prefers work that is routine | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 36. Is outgoing, sociable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 37. Is sometimes rude to others | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 38. Makes plans and follows through with them | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 39. Gets nervous easily | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 40. Likes to reflect, play with ideas | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 41. Has few artistic interests | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 42. Likes to cooperate with others | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 43. Is easily distracted | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 44. Is sophisticated in art, music, or literature | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

# Appendix 2.2

**Vulnerability Scale**

Please read each statement carefully and circle *one* number to indicate to what extent it describes you. Some statements may not apply directly to you now, but please indicate the option that best corresponds to you if you were placed in that situation.

| To what extent does each statement describe me? | Very untrue of me | Slightly untrue of me | Neither true nor untrue of me | Slightly true of me | Very true of me |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I tend to believe what I am told by others even if they have deceived me before. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. I tend to believe things that other people would view as clearly untrue. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. I cannot be tricked into revealing secrets to others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. I tend to believe everything I read (e.g. newspapers, magazines, books, advertisements, internet, etc.) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. I am frequently subjected to nit-picking and trivial fault-finding. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. I am always talked into doing unreasonable favours for others even when there is no chance of being paid back. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. I can be easily persuaded to purchase unneeded products or services (e.g. things I already own or will not use) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. I never lend money to someone who is unlikely to repay it (e.g. a stranger, or someone with a history of borrowing money and not paying it back). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. If I am subject to insults I tend to accept that the person insulting me has some justification. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. I cannot be tricked into taking the blame for something that I did not do. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| To what extent does each statement describe me? | Very untrue of me | Slightly untrue of me | Neither true nor untrue of me | Slightly true of me | Very true of me |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11. I tend to justify or defend or make excuses for others who act in a morally or ethically questionable manner. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. Sometimes I will take the blame for something I did not do, to avoid trouble. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. When someone takes credit for or steals my ideas and contributions without acknowledging them, I prefer not to expose them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. I have been talked into giving cheques, bank account details, or credit card numbers to a stranger who has later tried to defraud me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. I will retaliate if I am a target of offensive and inappropriate language. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. I have signed up for investments or deals that seem too good to be true (e.g. promising large returns in a short time). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. When I am criticised or given the 'silent treatment', it is normally because I have said or done something stupid. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. If I get blamed by someone for something that is not my fault, I will confront the person. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. If I do not like the way someone is treating me, I make allowances for the way they are behaving. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. In group discussions, my opinions tend to be overruled or ignored. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

# Appendix 3

# Information Sheet and Consent Form for Targets (Videotaped Participants) in Study 1



## Participant Information Sheet

**Title of the project: The perception of interpersonal behaviour**

My name is Kai Li Chung and I am a PhD student from the School of Life, Sport, and Social Sciences at Edinburgh Napier University. As part of my course, I am undertaking a research project for my thesis. You are being invited to participate in this research project. Before deciding to take part, please take the time to read the following carefully.

This is a piece of research on perception and personality. We are interested in looking at the influence of individual differences on the perception of interpersonal behaviour. This is an area of psychology related to how people view one another. The findings of this research will be useful, as they will aid our understanding of the dynamics in interpersonal relationships.

We are looking for volunteers to participate in the project. You are welcome to take part if you are aged 18 or over and are able to speak English fluently.

On the basis of your questionnaire responses in phase 1, you have been invited to participate in phase 2 of this study. Today you are asked to take part in two interaction tasks, which will be recorded on videotape. There is no right or wrong way to complete the task. As this research is on perception of interpersonal behaviour, parts of this video recording will be shown to other participants taking part in this project. We are interested in how these participants make decisions about personality based on short interactions. Participation in this phase of the study will take approximately 45 minutes in total.

We are not aware of any risks associated with taking part in this project. The video recording will be edited into a two-minute short clip and you will have the opportunity to view the complete video and the edited video. The edited video will be shown on a computer or laptop monitor to one participant at a time in one of the meeting rooms in Edinburgh Napier University's Sighthill campus.

To ensure privacy, all recorded data provided will be securely stored on computers that are password protected, to which only I and the Director of Study, Dr Kathy Charles, have access. These will be kept until the end of the research project, following which all data will be destroyed. You may withdraw your data from the project at any time up until 1$^{st}$ November 2015 after which time it will have been included in the analysis. This video will not be used for purposes for which they are not intended for. You are free to withdraw from the study at any stage today without having to provide reasons for doing so and without any consequences.

The information from this project will be used for the write-up of my thesis. The results may also be published in a journal or presented at a conference. You will not be identified in these contexts. Some presentations of this research may benefit from very short video clips or still images. Please indicate in the consent form whether you consent for your images to be used in this way.

This research is being funded by Edinburgh Napier University.

Thank you for reading this information – please ask any questions if you are unsure about what is written here.

If you have read and understood this information sheet, any questions you had have been answered, and you would like to continue and be involved in this project, you will first be asked to sign a consent form to confirm this.

If you do not wish to be involved in this project, thank you very much for your time and attention.

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If you have any questions/concerns, during or after the investigation, or would like to contact an independent person who knows about this project but is not involved in it, you are welcome to contact:

Dr Phyllis Laybourn
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Edinburgh EH11 4BN
Telephone: 0131 455 6017
E-mail: p.laybourn@napier.ac.uk

**Consent Form**

**Title of the project: The perception of interpersonal behaviour**

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above project and I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation.

I understand that I will be video-recorded and that this video clip will be shown to other participants for research purposes only.

I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this project and that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any stage today, without having to give reasons and without any consequences.

I understand that I can withdraw my data from the project at any time up until 1$^{st}$ November 2015 after which time it will have been included in the analysis.

I understand that any information recorded in the investigation will remain confidential and no other personal information that identifies me will be made publicly available.

I certify that I am 18 years old or older, and I consent to being a participant in this project.

Please indicate below whether you consent for your image to be used for academic presentation purposes.

☐ I consent to video clips being used to present research findings.

☐ I consent to still images being used to present research findings.

☐ I do not consent to either video or still images being used to present research findings.

Name of participant        :        _____
                                    (PRINT NAME)

Signature of participant   :        _____

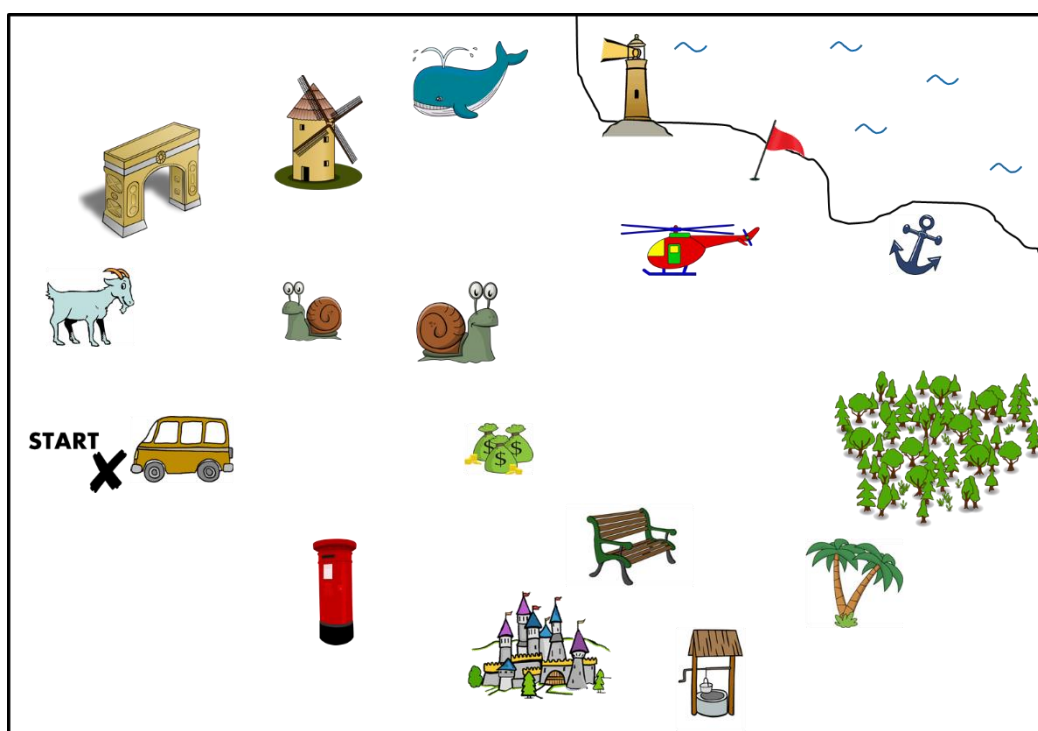Date                       :        _____

**Appendix 3.1**

**The Map Task**
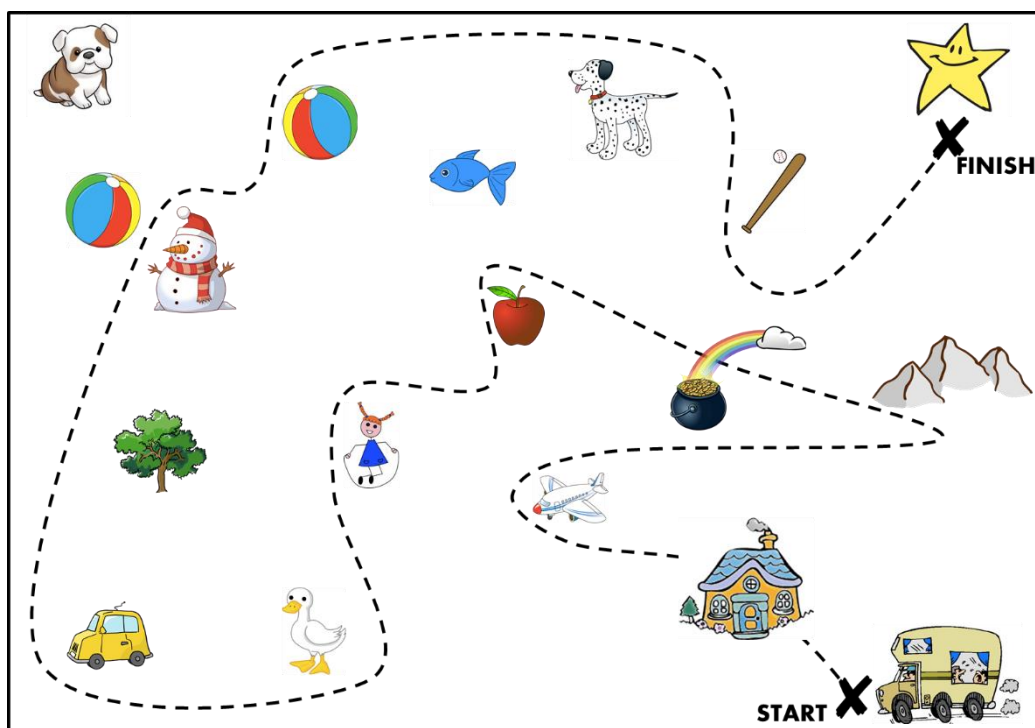


Speaker's map with route
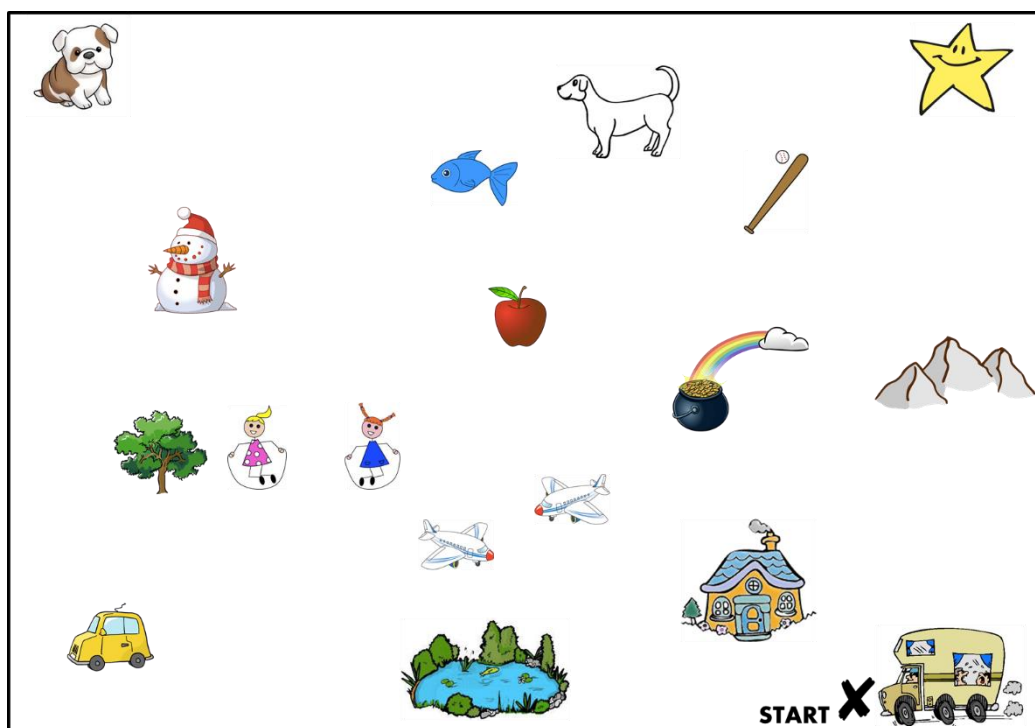


Addressee's map without route
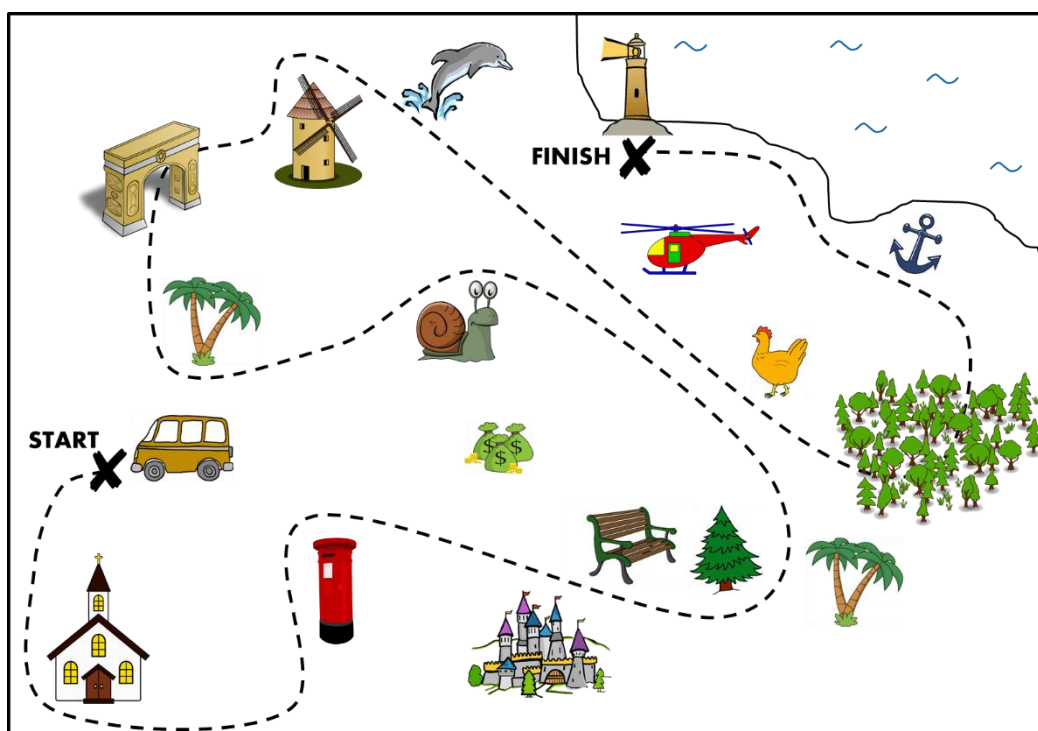
Speaker's map with route



Addressee's map without route

**Appendix 3.2**

**The Dress Task**



An elaborate 18th century dress as a stimulus picture

**Appendix 3.3**

**Debriefing Form for Targets (Videotaped Participants) in Study 1**

Edinburgh Napier
UNIVERSITY

<u>**Debriefing Form**</u>

**Title of the project: Accuracy in judging personality traits and assessing vulnerability**

Thank you for taking part in this study. This debrief form explains the purpose of the study in which you recently took part. If you would like to withdraw your data from this study as a result of this, you may do so at any time up until 1st November 2015 after which it will have been included in the analysis.

This study intends to find out how a type of personality can influence interpersonal sensitivity. Interpersonal sensitivity, the ability to accurately assess others' states and traits, varies from individual to individual depending on their personality. Research has found that people generally exhibit high degrees of accuracy in their judgement of others, even when minimal information is available. We are particularly interested in the interpersonal sensitivity among individuals with aversive personality traits, particularly those who score high on the narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy scales. These three traits are collectively known as the Dark Triad.

People high on the Dark Triad traits are characterised by poor interpersonal skills, low empathy, arrogance, inability to feel remorse, and cynicism. People with these traits are often engrossed with dominance and are inclined to employ aggressive tactics for personal gains. They often appear as attractive and charming people, but are very capable at manipulating and exploiting people around them, especially those who are vulnerable. Vulnerability can be explained as being susceptible to physical or psychological harm.

It also appears that some people are naturally more attuned to decoding body language than others. People with higher levels of narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy are often skilled at recognising vulnerability in people. Do people with these traits pick up on specific cues when it comes to identifying vulnerability?

In this study we attempt to investigate in more detail the kinds of cues in which individuals high on narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy identify when it comes to assessing personality and vulnerability. This study involves two phases. In phase 1, participants complete the Narcissism Personality Inventory, MACH-IV, and Self-Report Psychopathy Scale, which measures narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy respectively. A total score is obtained by adding the scores of all three inventories. Participants are then invited to take part in phase 2 of the study.

In phase 2, participants who have completed the Dark Triad measures are asked to watch four two-minute video clips of two people interacting with each other. Participants in the video clips have been selected based on their scores on the Vulnerability Scale. This self-report scale you have completed in phase 1 is only for educational use. It is not a diagnostic tool or psychological advice of any kind. Three of the four videos featured one participant who scored high and one participant who scored low on vulnerability. One video served as a control group whereby both participants had similar scores on vulnerability. It should be noted that the data is merely a comparison of scores collected from a non-clinical sample. After watching each clip, participants complete a Personality Traits and Vulnerability Evaluation Questionnaire.

Since people with higher Dark Triad scores are more adept at recognising vulnerability, it is hypothesised that they are better at reading people and are able to pick up on specific cues such as facial expressions, body language, and linguistic cues when assessing personality and vulnerability.

If you are concerned or worried about anything that was brought up in the study, then you may wish to talk to someone about this. It could be a person you feel comfortable talking to. You may consult your GP, or if you are a student of Edinburgh Napier University, you may wish to seek advice from the counselling services.

**The Counsellors and Mental Health Adviser Contact Details:**
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Student HUB
10 Colinton Road
Edinburgh EH10 5DT
Telephone: 0131 455 2929
E-mail: counselling@napier.ac.uk

**NHS 24 Contact Details:**
NHS 24 works in partnership with local NHS Boards out-of-hours services to provide patients with health advice and help when GP practices are closed.
Telephone: 08454 24 24 24
Website: http://www.nhs24.com

**The Samaritans Contact Details:**
The Samaritans offer free, confidential advice 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
Telephone: 08457 90 90 90
Website: http://www.samaritans.org
Email: jo@samaritans.org

Feel free to contact my supervisor or me if you have any questions. Thank you again for taking part.

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**Appendix 4**

**Information Sheet and Consent Form for Perceivers (Participants Watching Videos) in Study 1**



**Participant Information Sheet**

**Title of the project: Accuracy in judging personality traits and assessing vulnerability**

My name is Kai Li Chung and I am a postgraduate research student from the School of Life, Sport, and Social Sciences at Edinburgh Napier University. As part of my PhD course, I am undertaking a research project for my thesis. You are being invited to participate in this research project. Before deciding to take part, please take the time to read the following carefully.

This is a piece of research on personality. We are interested in looking at the influence of individual differences on the accuracy of judging personality traits and assessing vulnerability. The findings of this research will be useful, as they will aid our understanding of the dynamics in interpersonal relationships.

We are looking for volunteers to participate in the project. You are welcome to take part if you are aged 18 or over and are able to speak English fluently.

On the basis of your questionnaire responses in phase 1, you have been invited to participate in phase 2 of this study. Today you are asked to watch four video clips and complete questionnaires. Participation in this phase of the study will take approximately 60 minutes in total.

We are not aware of any risks associated with taking part in this project. You are free to withdraw from the study at any stage without having to provide reasons for doing so and without any consequences.

To ensure confidentiality, all data provided will be securely stored in a secure filing cabinet and on computers that are password protected, to which only I and the Director of Study, Dr Kathy Charles, have access. These will be kept till the end of the research project, following which all data will be destroyed. You may withdraw your data from the project at any time up until 1st July 2016 after which time it will have been included in the anonymous analysis and so will no longer be traceable.

The information from this project will be used for the write-up of my thesis. The results may also be published in a journal or presented at a conference.

This research is being funded by Edinburgh Napier University.

Thank you for reading this information – please ask any questions if you are unsure about what is written here.

If you have read and understood this information sheet, any questions you had have been answered, and you would like to continue and be involved in this project, you will first be asked to sign a consent form to confirm this.

If you do not wish to be involved in this project, thank you very much for your time and attention.

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If you have any questions/concerns, during or after the investigation, or would like to contact an independent person who knows about this project but is not involved in it, you are welcome to contact:

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Sighthill Court
Edinburgh EH11 4BN
Telephone: 0131 455 6017
E-mail: p.laybourn@napier.ac.uk

**Consent Form**

**Title of the project: Accuracy in judging personality traits and assessing vulnerability**

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above project and I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation.

I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this study and that I have the right to withdraw from the project at any time, without having to give a reason and without any consequences.

I understand that I can withdraw my data from the project at any time up until 1st July 2016.

I understand that any information recorded in the investigation will remain confidential and no information that identifies me will be made publicly available.

I certify that I am 18 years old or older, and I consent to being a participant in this project.


Name of participant:        _____
                                        (PRINT NAME)


Signature of participant     :          _____

**Appendix 4.1**

**Personality and Emotional Traits Evaluation Questionnaire**

Using your judgement, please circle *one* number to each statement below that best represents how you feel about each person in the video clips. We are simply interested in what your impression is of each person, so please be honest. Please note that general descriptions of the personality traits are provided just as a guidance to help you come to a decision.

Please estimate *A*'s level of self-esteem (*how good he/she feels about him/herself, his/her level of self-acceptance and self-worth*).

| Extremely low self-esteem | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Extremely high self-esteem |

Please estimate how assertive *A* is (*how good he/she is at making requests, actively disagreeing with others, expressing his/her rights and feelings, initiating, maintaining, or ending conversations, and standing up for him/herself*).

| Not at all assertive | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Extremely assertive |

Please estimate how anxious *A* is (*how much he/she tends to worry about things and/or have physical feelings of anxiety like racing heart, feeling dizzy, etc.*).

| Not at all anxious | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Extremely anxious |

Please estimate how depressed *A* is (*how much he/she tends to feel sad and hopeless and/or have physical feelings of depression like trouble sleeping, lacking energy, etc.*).

| Not at all depressed | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Extremely depressed |

Please estimate how empathic A is (feels warmth, compassion, and concern for others).

| Not at all empathic | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Extremely empathic |

Please describe in detail the cues that you used to determine the *A*'s personality traits.

Please estimate *B*'s level of self-esteem (*how good he/she feels about him/herself, his/her level of self-acceptance and self-worth*).

Extremely low self-esteem  1  2  3  4  5  Extremely high self-esteem

Please estimate how assertive *B* is (*how good he/she is at making requests, actively disagreeing with others, expressing his/her rights and feelings, initiating, maintaining, or ending conversations, and standing up for him/herself*).

Not at all assertive  1  2  3  4  5  Extremely assertive

Please estimate how anxious *B* is (*how much he/she tends to worry about things and/or have physical feelings of anxiety like racing heart, feeling dizzy, etc.*).

Not at all anxious  1  2  3  4  5  Extremely anxious

Please estimate how depressed *B* is (*how much he/she tends to feel sad and hopeless and/or have physical feelings of depression like trouble sleeping, lacking energy, etc.*).

Not at all depressed  1  2  3  4  5  Extremely depressed

Please estimate how empathic B is (feels warmth, compassion, and concern for others).

Not at all empathic  1  2  3  4  5  Extremely empathic

Please describe in detail the cues that you used to determine the *B*'s personality traits.

**Appendix 4.2**

**Vulnerability Assessment Questionnaire**

Based on the video clips, please indicate who the more vulnerable person is and how easy it is for each person to be taken advantage of by circling *one* response to each statement below. We are simply interested in what your impression is of each person – this does not mean that you would actually take advantage of these people in real life.

If a manipulative person had to choose, who do you think he or she would have more luck in taking advantage of?

*A*     or     *B*

How easy do you think it would be to take advantage of A?

Very difficult  1     2     3     4     5     Very easy

How easy do you think it would be to take advantage of B?

Very difficult  1     2     3     4     5     Very easy

Please describe in detail the cues that you used to determine whether the individual is vulnerable.

**Appendix 4.3**

**Debriefing Form for Perceivers (Participants Watching Videos) in Study 1**



**Debriefing Form**

**Title of the project: Accuracy in judging personality traits and assessing vulnerability**

Thank you for taking part in this study. This debrief form explains the purpose of the study in which you recently took part. If you would like to withdraw your data from this study as a result of this, you may do so at any time up until 1st July 2016 after which it will have been included in the anonymous analysis and so will no longer be traceable.

This study intends to find out how a type of personality can influence interpersonal sensitivity. Interpersonal sensitivity, the ability to accurately assess others' states and traits, varies from individual to individual depending on their personality. Research has found that people generally exhibit high degrees of accuracy in their judgement of others, even when minimal information is available. We are particularly interested in the interpersonal sensitivity among individuals who score high on the narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy scales. These three traits are collectively known as the Dark Triad.

At its extreme, narcissism is characterised by an elevated sense of self-importance, lack of empathy, and an overwhelming need for compliments and admiration. Extreme Machiavellians are emotionally detached, cunning, and are capable of pursuing self-interests through dishonest means. Psychopathy typically reflects high impulsivity, behavioural problems, and the inability to feel remorse. However, research has found these to be potentially adaptive features, as people with such personalities can be very successful in organisations. Some researchers argue that these personalities appear on a spectrum of traits that everyone possesses to varying degrees.

It also appears that some people are naturally more attuned to decoding body language than others. People with higher levels of narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy are often skilled at recognising vulnerability in people. Do people with these traits pick up on specific cues when it comes to identifying vulnerability?

In this study we attempt to investigate in more detail the kinds of cues in which individuals high on narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy identify when it comes to assessing personality and vulnerability. This study involves two phases. In phase 1, participants complete the Narcissism Personality Inventory, MACH-IV, and Self-Report Psychopathy Scale, which measures narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy respectively. A total score is obtained by adding the scores of all three inventories. Participants are then invited to take part in phase 2 of the study.

In phase 2, participants are asked to watch four two-minute video clips of two people interacting with each other. Participants in the video clips have been selected based on their scores on a vulnerability scale. Three of the four videos featured one participant who scored high and one participant who scored low on vulnerability. One video served as a control group whereby both participants had similar scores on vulnerability. After watching each clip, participants complete a Personality Traits and Vulnerability Evaluation Questionnaire.

Since people with higher Dark Triad scores are more adept at recognising vulnerability, it is hypothesised that they are better at reading people and are able to pick up on specific cues such as facial expressions, body language, and linguistic cues when assessing personality and vulnerability. The difference between high- and low-scorers is relative; the data is merely a comparison of scores collected from a non-clinical sample. These self-report scales you have completed are only for educational use. They are not diagnostic tools or psychological advice of any kind.

If you are concerned or worried about anything that was brought up in the study, then you may wish to talk to someone about this. It could be a person you feel comfortable talking to. You may consult your GP, or if you are a student of Edinburgh Napier University, you may wish to seek advice from the counselling services.

**The Counsellors and Mental Health Adviser Contact Details:**
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**NHS 24 Contact Details:**
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Telephone: 08454 24 24 24
Website: http://www.nhs24.com

**The Samaritans Contact Details:**
The Samaritans offer free, confidential advice 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
Telephone: 08457 90 90 90
Website: http://www.samaritans.org
Email: jo@samaritans.org

Feel free to contact my supervisor or me if you have any questions. Thank you again for taking part.

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E-mail: k.charles@napier.ac.uk

**Appendix 5**

**Information Sheet and Consent Form for Participants in Study 2**



**Participant Information Sheet**

**Title of the project: The perception of interpersonal behaviour**

My name is Kai Li Chung and I am a postgraduate research student from the School of Life, Sport, and Social Sciences at Edinburgh Napier University. As part of my PhD course, I am undertaking a research project for my thesis. You are being invited to participate in this research project. Before deciding to take part, please take the time to read the following carefully.

This is a piece of research on perception and personality. We are interested in looking at the influence of individual differences on the perception of interpersonal behaviour. The findings of this research will be useful, as they will aid our understanding of the dynamics in interpersonal relationships.

We are looking for volunteers to participate in the project. You are welcome to take part if you are aged 18 or over and are able to speak English fluently.

On the basis of your questionnaire responses in phase 1, you have been invited to participate in phase 2 of this study. Today you are asked to read five short stories and complete questionnaires. Participation in this phase of the study will take approximately 45 minutes in total.

We are not aware of any risks associated with taking part in this project. You are free to withdraw from the study at any stage without having to provide reasons for doing so and without any consequences.

To ensure confidentiality, all data provided will be securely stored in a secure filing cabinet and on computers that are password protected, to which only I and the Director of Study, Dr Kathy Charles, have access. These will be kept till the end of the research project, following which all data will be destroyed. You may withdraw your data from the project at any time up until 1$^{st}$ April 2015 after which time it will have been included in the anonymous analysis and so will no longer be traceable.

The information from this project will be used for the write-up of my thesis. The results may also be published in a journal or presented at a conference.

This research is being funded by Edinburgh Napier University.

Thank you for reading this information – please ask any questions if you are unsure about what is written here.

If you have read and understood this information sheet, any questions you had have been answered, and you would like to continue and be involved in this project, you will first be asked to sign a consent form to confirm this.

If you do not wish to be involved in this project, thank you very much for your time and attention.

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**Supervisor Contact Details:**
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Edinburgh Napier University
Sighthill Court
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Telephone: 0131 455 5039
E-mail: k.charles@napier.ac.uk

If you have any questions/concerns, during or after the investigation, or would like to contact an independent person who knows about this project but is not involved in it, you are welcome to contact:

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Edinburgh Napier University
Sighthill Court
Edinburgh EH11 4BN
Telephone: 0131 455 6017
E-mail: p.laybourn@napier.ac.uk

**Consent Form**

**Title of the project: Accuracy in judging personality traits and assessing vulnerability**

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above project and I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation.

I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this study and that I have the right to withdraw from the project at any time, without having to give a reason and without any consequences.

I understand that I can withdraw my data from the project at any time up until 1st April 2015.

I understand that any information recorded in the investigation will remain confidential and no information that identifies me will be made publicly available.

I certify that I am 18 years old or older, and I consent to being a participant in this project.


Name of participant      :      _____
                                (PRINT NAME)


Signature of participant  :      _____


Date                     :      _____

**Appendix 5.1**

**Vignettes**

Please read Kelly's story below and answer the questions on the next sheet.

Kelly has been married to Frank for over 25 years. She married him to get away from a terrible home life with an alcoholic mother. When they first met, Frank was sweet and loving. He promised Kelly the world; that he would build her a dream home, they would go on exotic trips, and that he would work so hard that they would never have to worry about money. He also said that if Kelly wanted to stay home and raise children, he would support her. Kelly was drawn completely to this "home-loving" provider.

They married only three months after they met. Almost immediately after, Frank stopped being loving. Kelly started to notice that Frank was very selfish. For their wedding, they received a cheque from Kelly's aunt. However, she forgot to sign it. Kelly's aunt was very ill with cancer and Kelly had no intention of telling her. For all Kelly knew, her aunt could not afford it and left it unsigned on purpose. When Frank found out, he wanted to have her sign the cheque. Kelly was appalled, but Frank was very convincing in saying that her aunt would want this. So off they went to visit Kelly's aunt. It was very humiliating for Kelly. Her aunt did sign the check and as soon as she did, Frank wanted to leave. Kelly was never able to visit her aunt again because he always made up excuses as to why they could not.

During their honeymoon thereafter, while window shopping Frank saw a belt knife that he went crazy for. Despite not having much money, Frank bought the knife – something he did not need and was far too expensive. It made Kelly upset that he had used all of the money from Kelly's aunt on something for himself.

Upon their return, Frank told everyone who would listen that the belt knife was a surprise honeymoon gift from Kelly. Kelly could not figure out why he would lie, but it turned out that lying was something he did all the time so people would like him, and to cover up for himself when needed. He lied about the most trivial things. For example, Frank had always ruined Kelly's clothes when he did the laundry – never his clothes, only hers – so Kelly made him promise that he would leave it for her. But Frank always failed to keep any of his promises, and would lie to Kelly to defend himself. So if Kelly heard the washing machine going and asked Frank, "Did you put a load of laundry in?" he would exclaim, "No, I never touched it!" This hardly made sense, as there were only two of them in the house.

They could never discuss anything without an argument. Even if Kelly spoke nicely and calmly, he would become hostile, extraordinarily defensive, and even abusive immediately. If Kelly tried to convey her feelings after being hurt by him, he would say that all she wanted to do was to put the blame on him. He never took responsibility for anything. For many years, Kelly truly felt that she was the one who caused all the problems.

Kelly was also in charge of almost all the household responsibilities. From working full time to paying bills, cleaning, and raising their child virtually alone. All Frank did

was work, come home, and watch television. He spent recklessly on expensive and unnecessary things, or treating his friends to lunch. He even had a winter car and a summer car while Kelly had to take the bus everywhere she went. And yet if Kelly was unable to pay all the bills, Frank would get furious and accuse her of spending the money.

Frank also cheated constantly. The first time was only a few months after their marriage, the next was when she was in the hospital giving birth to their son, and many more followed. He has never admitted to most of them or owned up to any of them. Kelly always found out the hard way. Whenever she confronted him he would apologise and promise never to do it again, but the hostility and abuse would follow. Kelly contracted two sexually transmitted diseases from Frank because he never used protection when cheating. The diseases left Kelly so internally scarred that she was unable to have any more children at the age of 25.

*Note: All names have been changed.*

The following statements concern your perception about the two main characters in the short story you have just read. Please tick *one* box to indicate the strength of your agreement with each statement. We are simply interested in what your impression is of each character, so please be honest.

| To what extent do you agree to the following statements? | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither disagree nor agree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Kelly is fully responsible for how Frank has been treating her. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2. Frank is fully responsible for how he has been treating Kelly. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 3. The ways in which Kelly reacted to Frank's behaviour were understandable. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 4. There are good reasons to rationalise and tolerate Frank's behaviour. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5. Kelly should change her behaviour. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 6. Frank should change his behaviour. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 7. If given a chance, Kelly can make an effort to change her behaviour. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 8. If given a chance, Frank can make an effort to change his behaviour. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

What are your impressions of Frank?
*Please write your answers below, even if it is very brief.*

What are your impressions of Kelly?
*Please write your answers below, even if it is very brief.*

Which character in the story do you most identify with, and why?

*Please help us understand why you selected this character.*

Please read the story below and answer the questions on the next sheet.

With his smooth, strong entrance, fine suit and a broad confident smile he looked as if he was arriving at a Gentlemen's Quarterly photo shoot. The women in the foyer immediately noticed him. "Hi, I'm Dave. I'm here to see Scott," he said to the receptionist, who swooned.

Scott was pleased to meet Dave. He had an impressive CV with the specialised education and experience the company needed. Dave was also very pleasant and positive, giving compliments abundantly. He charmed everyone in the interview including Scott's boss, John. John was very pleased to interact with someone who, despite his age, showed great interest in the company and understood well its business intricacies. John pushed aside the suggested interview questions the Human Resources department had prepared and asked Dave to talk about himself. Dave obliged by describing his work history, giving plenty of examples reflecting John's respect for hard work and diligence. The interview went exceptionally well. As the interview ended, Dave shook their hands and thanked them both firmly.

Although they initially agreed for all the interviewers to meet and discuss the other candidates, Scott and John thought, with Dave's style, intelligence, and technical expertise they had found the perfect candidate. Scott did not want him to get away, and made the offer. Dave pushed back at the initial salary. Despite it being high in the range, Scott enhanced the offer with a sign-on bonus and review in six months.

Everyone loved Dave. In three months, he had met and introduced himself to almost everyone. He had his lists of winners, losers, and wannabes. He made sure he built connections with the top achievers, such as Debbie, an 'employee of the month', whom Dave wanted to join his team. He convinced her that with his good rapport with John, Debbie would definitely benefit and be given great opportunities if she decided to join his team.

A few times, Dave had tried to enter the office building after hours while he was new and did not have card access. The security guard reasoned that Dave was not allowed to enter unauthorised. Dave said he had connections with all the big shots and that the guard would be in trouble if Dave was not allowed access to the office to complete an important task. Feeling that he had no choice, the guard let him enter.

About six months later, Scott noticed that things were getting worse. He received reports that Dave was disrupting and dominating the team until many refused to work with him. People were afraid to speak up, and lost interest in the project because they felt they could do no right by Dave. He yelled at people, cut them off while they delivered their reports, and embarrassed them if they made a suggestion. Yet he went to meetings unprepared and was always late. Some said he was not doing his work, and that Debbie was doing it for him. Once, Scott found out that Dave copied exact paragraphs from an industry magazine article into his report. When raised with him, Dave went ballistic and ranted that there were too many meetings. After calming down, Dave assured Scott he would improve.

Upon checking Dave's personnel file, Scott noticed discrepancies between his letter, CV, and application form. He listed three very different, although similar, university degrees on these documents. At first Scott thought it was a clerical mistake, but upon further digging, it turned out that the university on his CV was actually an unaccredited online institution. The internal auditors also found that Dave had been using his signature authority to buy a new computer and some peripherals without going through the proper channels.

After a few months, Scott went to John to speak about the situation. John told him that Dave had gone to John to complain that Scott was being too demanding and detail-oriented. Apparently, Dave had also complained about how Debbie was not carrying her own weight. Dave blamed Debbie for the delays, and said that he had to spend all his time tutoring her and fixing her mistakes. Scott was annoyed with the contradictions.

*Note: All names have been changed.*

The following statements concern your perception about the two main characters in the short story you have just read. Please tick *one* box to indicate the strength of your agreement with each statement. We are simply interested in what your impression is of each character, so please be honest.

| To what extent do you agree to the following statements? | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither disagree nor agree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Scott is fully responsible for how Dave has been treating him. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2. Dave is fully responsible for how he has been treating Scott. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 3. The ways in which Scott reacted to Dave's behaviour were understandable. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 4. There are good reasons to rationalise and tolerate Dave's behaviour. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5. Scott should change his behaviour. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 6. Dave should change his behaviour. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 7. If given a chance, Scott can make an effort to change his behaviour. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 8. If given a chance, Dave can make an effort to change his behaviour. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

What are your impressions of Dave?
*Please write your answers below, even if it is very brief.*

What are your impressions of Scott?
*Please write your answers below, even if it is very brief.*

Which character in the story do you most identify with, and why?

*Please help us understand why you selected this character.*

Please read the story below and answer the questions on the next sheet.

Alex always knew how to rile up a crowd. The words came naturally to him; every sentence that came out of his mouth would end with cheers and claps. The voters loved him, what he stood for, and the new politics that he promised. Alex would never personally attack an opponent. From day one, it was ideas, policies, and statistics. But as he stood in front of the enthusiastic crowd, it was his team of fresh graduates standing behind him that loved him the most. They came from various backgrounds; science, political studies, business, and more. All with fresh ideas, wanting to make a change, and drawn to Alex's promise of new politics: Out with the old, in with the new. And he told them, "You are the new."

For Joanne, it was always Alex's promise of revamping education that secured her loyalty. She remembers clearly: she just graduated in politics and found herself unable to believe in all the candidates. Then she saw Alex on television. The host had asked him his views on the education system. Alex kept quiet for a while. He looked down, deep in thought, and slowly unravelled his views. It matched hers exactly. She knew there and then this man had to be the next prime minister. Joanne found herself sitting in his office within a week. She told him her ideas on the state of the education and how it could be improved. He agreed, and said it was young visionaries like her that the country needed and hired her on the spot. He promised that when he became prime minister, she would have a hand in the change she wanted.

Alex was not the easiest person to work with. His mood was easily affected by little things. If they brought him coffee that was too hot or cold (it was impossible to tell without passing it to him), he would subject them to an earful of abuse, and they would return to their desks holding back tears. But they didn't mind, and gladly picked up his dry cleaning and fetched his kids. Alex had a vision, and every little bit they could do to make his life easier meant better things for the country. It still surprises Joanne how much she was willing to put up with. "See that little minx there?" he once pointed to a young lady walking past, "I'd like bring her back to the office, tell her she has brains – she obviously doesn't – and that I can't run this campaign without her. Then I'd touch her up every day." Joanne wasn't sure how to react and just laughed. "Surely," she told herself, "that couldn't be the case with me."

When their party won the general elections Alex gave the most inspiring speech Joanne had ever heard. He even mentioned her ideas, but replaced his meeting with her with a made-up anecdote on how he came up with the idea. It hurt her, but who was she to expect credit in a prime minister's inaugural speech? The focus should be on him, she thought. After celebrating that night, she found herself alone with Alex in their campaign office. She was taken by surprise when he tried to force himself on her. She pushed him away. He accused her of being ungrateful, picked up a vase next to him and threw it on the floor. Joanne ran.

When she walked into the campaign office the next morning, Alex was on the phone. He looked at her, waved, and continued his conversation. The vase was no longer where it had crashed. "Just spoke to my new education minister," Alex said later with an assuring smile. "We've got work to do. You ready to make some change?" Joanne smiled and said yes; perhaps he was a little drunk that night.

A month later she found herself in a meeting with people who were the cause of everything that was wrong with this country's education. These 'education barons' stood to lose their profits if her ideas were put in place. "We can't make a change without knowing our enemy," Alex said when he informed her about this meeting. She was reluctant to go as she hated them. "I need you there. You're the best I've got." he coaxed her. How could she say no? During the meeting, Alex placed his arms around the barons and laughed as if they had been long time compatriots. There and then, Joanne couldn't tell whose side Alex was on.

*Note: All names have been changed.*

The following statements concern your perception about the two main characters in the short story you have just read. Please tick *one* box to indicate the strength of your agreement with each statement. We are simply interested in what your impression is of each character, so please be honest.

| To what extent do you agree to the following statements? | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither disagree nor agree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Joanne is fully responsible for how Alex has been treating her. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2. Alex is fully responsible for how he has been treating Joanne. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 3. The ways in which Joanne reacted to Alex's behaviour were understandable. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 4. There are good reasons to rationalise and tolerate Alex's behaviour. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5. Joanne should change her behaviour. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 6. Alex should change his behaviour. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 7. If given a chance, Joanne can make an effort to change her behaviour. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 8. If given a chance, Alex can make an effort to change his behaviour. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

What are your impressions of Alex?
*Please write your answers below, even if it is very brief.*

What are your impressions of Joanne?
*Please write your answers below, even if it is very brief.*

Which character in the story do you most identify with, and why?

*Please help us understand why you selected this character.*

Please read the story below and answer the questions on the next sheet.

Mike is a married man, but had an affair with a woman named Sandra. They met in a conference, where he felt an immediate attraction to her.

Besides the fact that she made him laugh, Sandra ticked all the right boxes. She was smart and beautiful. Mike knew he wasn't the only one she flirted with, but she made him feel as if she craved his attention alone. Although it was obvious that she felt entitled to it, that only increased his attraction to her and the want to shower her with gifts.

The attention Sandra gave him in return was addictive. She would woo him with compliments and make it known that she was crazy about him. What he loved about her was her tendency to do things spontaneously solely because it was fun. On her suggestion, they often skipped work on the guise of meeting to talk business, and hit every pub in town (although he was always expected to foot the bill). In their secret encounters, she would allude to them having a future together. That made him happy. His marriage was going through some difficulties, and Sandra was the escape he needed.

But she was never one for the down times. When his dog died, he expressed his grief to her and expected some comfort. But none came. She stared at him blankly, and said, "I wish I could feel what you feel." A few months later, when Mike was clearly distraught as his father was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, once again she stared at him vacantly and finally mustered up a pat on his shoulder.

What she lacked in empathy, she made up with zest and cheerfulness. For example, she was into rock climbing. Her liveliness also showed in the way she made quick decisions. She invested in shares, and never batted an eye whenever she made buying or selling decisions. However, she never felt responsible for her actions. In the short time that he had been involved with her, she was sacked twice allegedly due to laziness and general disinterest, which of course she denies. Yet, she somehow climbed higher each time, managing to land on jobs with higher pay and positions.

Eventually Sandra started to treat Mike differently. Once, while out shopping, he told her she did not need yet another designer bag. Her immediate reaction was to degrade him and complain that she was wasting her time with him when many other people, both men and women, wanted her. She had a painfully sharp tongue – there were times when he tried to reason with her and she would say all kinds of insensitive things.

At this point in time, they were supposedly committed to one another. Of course, she cheated. Mike knew she was always lying to him. Initially she would talk or cry herself out of a bind when found out. Her tears melted his heart. But after a while it became obvious that they were forced tears and rehearsed lines. But Sandra knew Mike wanted her, so it didn't matter if he could see past her; she could manipulate him. Sex was a tool too. Whenever he wanted to end the relationship, there she would be, undressing. Mike was helpless.

Beyond her constant need for attention, sex was her entitlement. If he couldn't keep up, there were always other people willing and able. She made that known, and acted on it too. As his tolerance of her behaviour grudgingly grew, he began to observe her pattern. She would use her charm to take what she wanted, and then leave them broken-hearted and confused.

Letting her be the way she is, Mike became what fitted her needs, even if it broke him inside. Yet, for no reason whatsoever, she ended the relationship with a single text message. He never saw her again. For a long time Mike wondered what he did wrong.

*Note: All names have been changed.*

The following statements concern your perception about the two main characters in the short story you have just read. Please tick *one* box to indicate the strength of your agreement with each statement. We are simply interested in what your impression is of each character, so please be honest.

| To what extent do you agree to the following statements? | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither disagree nor agree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Mike is fully responsible for how Sandra has been treating him. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2. Sandra is fully responsible for how she has been treating Mike. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 3. The ways in which Mike reacted to Sandra's behaviour were understandable. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 4. There are good reasons to rationalise and tolerate Sandra's behaviour. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5. Mike should change his behaviour. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 6. Sandra should change her behaviour. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 7. If given a chance, Mike can make an effort to change his behaviour. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 8. If given a chance, Sandra can make an effort to change her behaviour. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

What are your impressions of Sandra?
*Please write your answers below, even if it is very brief.*

What are your impressions of Mike?
*Please write your answers below, even if it is very brief.*

Which character in the story do you most identify with, and why?

*Please help us understand why you selected this character.*

Please read the story below and answer the questions on the next sheet.

Every Christmas Jane's mother would buy her an expensive piece of clothing that she would never wear. Or, if she was lucky, it might be several pieces of clothing meant to be worn together. The clothes are described as expensive because Jane's mother would make a point of telling Jane how much everything cost, and the effort she had expended. Unfortunately, she always predicted Jane's taste so wrongly that Jane thought she might know an alternate universe version of Jane who dressed in ethnic print skirts with gathered waists and blouses with Peter Pan collars. Jane dreaded these gifts because they would hang in her closet unworn, causing her shame for having selfishly wasted her mother's time and money.

Then one year, Jane finally came up with a brilliant solution: she suggested that they go out shopping for her gift together, and was truly thrilled when her mother agreed. Jane knew just what she wanted: a black fitted blazer that she could wear with everything. Not only would it be stylish and versatile, it would herald the end to her guilt about unworn presents. On the appointed day, Jane and her mother walked around department stores for hours on end as her mother waved clothes she did not like at her in a flag-like manner. Not wanting to offend her, Jane made sure to say, "Yes, that's really lovely," or, "Wow, great choice!" in reaction to each outfit. But Jane held firm. After the third time she said, "I could really use a new black blazer," but her mother made a grim face. She let loose with her curled lip, insisting that Jane at least try on the clothes she picked out. Respectfully, she played along. Nearing closing time, Jane said, "Mom, as much as I love all those things you showed me, you know what? I really need this black blazer. I can wear it to work, for casual stuff, over pyjamas, it's a bull's eye on every front," Her mother sighed, rolled her eyes, and exhaled an exasperated gust of air. Then she muttered bitterly, as she handed over her credit card to the cashier, "This is the last time I am doing anything like this. I get no pleasure from buying you something I don't happen to like." As Jane followed her out of the store, her mother shook her head silently and pursed her lips. She could barely look at Jane.

Jane was shocked and puzzled by this. Here she thought that she was not only saving her mother time and money, but was ensuring her future happiness by being able to show up for family functions wearing her present. Instead she had ruined Christmas for her mother.

This was just one of many bafflingly similar incidents that cluttered Jane's life for years. By then Jane began to notice that her parents and boyfriends had the same complaints. She was combative and contrarian, according to a boyfriend who became furious if she stayed up late to watch a movie by herself instead of going to bed when he did. Other boyfriends she used to have accused her of caring only about herself and insisting on having things her own way.

Jane figured she had better make an effort to repair her shortcomings. So, she signed up for therapy hoping to discover what steps she needed to take to remedy the situation.

But what she learned was unexpected; that she was the child of two law-abiding, middle-class narcissists, a man and a woman bound together by their twin passions of

criticizing their offspring and picking fights in restaurants. And because of this legacy, she was attracted to narcissists as lovers and friends. Jane finally had a reasonable explanation for why she and her brother always seemed to wear, do and say the wrong things at family gatherings, even with smart outfits, tidy haircuts, and carefully selected topics of conversation. For years they were faced with embarrassing restaurant incidents in which her parents behaved like aristocracy and treated the stammering waiting staff with utter contempt.

*Note: All names have been changed.*

The following statements concern your perception about the two main characters in the short story you have just read. Please tick *one* box to indicate the strength of your agreement with each statement. We are simply interested in what your impression is of each character, so please be honest.

| To what extent do you agree to the following statements? | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither disagree nor agree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Jane is fully responsible for how her mother has been treating her. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2. Jane's mother is fully responsible for how she has been treating Jane. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 3. The ways in which Jane reacted to her mother's behaviour were understandable. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 4. There are good reasons to rationalise and tolerate her mother's behaviour. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5. Jane should change her behaviour. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 6. Jane's mother should change her behaviour. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 7. If given a chance, Jane can make an effort to change her behaviour. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 8. If given a chance, Jane's mother can make an effort to change her behaviour. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

What are your impressions of Jane's mother?
*Please write your answers below, even if it is very brief.*

What are your impressions of Jane?
*Please write your answers below, even if it is very brief.*

Which character in the story do you most identify with, and why?

*Please help us understand why you selected this character.*

**Appendix 5.2**

**Debriefing Form for Participants in Study 2**

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**<u>Debriefing Form</u>**

**<span style="color:red">Title of the project: The perception of interpersonal behaviour</span>**

Thank you for taking part in this study. This debrief form explains the purpose of the study in which you recently took part. If you would like withdraw your data from this study as a result of this, you may do so at any time up until 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 after which it will have been included in the anonymous analysis and so will no longer be traceable.

This study intends to determine the characteristics in individual who enable and abet people with aversive personality traits. We are particularly interested in exploring the processes and mechanisms within people who are susceptible to manipulation.

People with aversive personality traits are characterised by poor interpersonal skills, low empathy, arrogance, inability to feel remorse, and cynicism. People with these traits are often engrossed with dominance and are inclined to employ aggressive tactics for personal gains. They often appear as attractive and charming people, but are very capable at manipulating and exploiting people around them, especially those who are vulnerable. Vulnerability can be explained as being susceptible to physical or psychological harm.

In this study we attempt to elicit perceptions and opinions from people who may be susceptible to manipulation by people with aversive traits. This study involves two phases. In phase 1, participants complete a personality test known as the Big Five Inventory, as well as the Vulnerability Scale which measures vulnerability. After ranking them according to their scores from the highest to the lowest, the top 30 high-scorers and the bottom 30 low-scorers are invited to take part in phase 2.

In phase 2, the high- and low-scorers are asked to read five hypothetical scenarios depicting people with aversive personality traits and their manipulation strategies. Participants then complete a set of questionnaires based on the scenarios.

Although people with aversive personality traits are known to be dysfunctional in interpersonal relationships, it is argued that in reality people favour those with destructive behaviours as they have the capacity to captivate and impress people. It is hypothesised that people who are susceptible to such manipulation possess certain characteristics that make them vulnerable targets. It should be noted that the data is merely a comparison of scores collected from a non-clinical sample.

If you are concerned or worried about anything that was brought up in the study, then you may wish to talk to someone about this. It could be a person you feel comfortable talking to. You may consult your GP, or if you are a student of Edinburgh Napier University, you may wish to seek advice from the counselling services.

**The Counsellors and Mental Health Adviser Contact Details:**
Edinburgh Napier University Merchiston Campus
Student HUB
10 Colinton Road
Edinburgh EH10 5DT
Telephone: 0131 455 2929
E-mail: counselling@napier.ac.uk

Feel free to contact me or my supervisor if you have any questions. Thank you again for taking part.

**Researcher Contact Details:**
Kai Li Chung
School of Life, Sport, and Social Sciences
Edinburgh Napier University
Sighthill Court
Edinburgh EH11 4BN
E-mail: k.chung@napier.ac.uk

**Supervisor Contact Details:**
Dr Kathy Charles
School of Life, Sport, and Social Sciences
Edinburgh Napier University
Sighthill Court
Edinburgh EH11 4BN
Telephone: 0131 455 5039
E-mail: k.charles@napier.ac.uk

**Appendix 6**

**Information Sheet and Consent Form for Participants in Study 3**



**Participant Information Sheet**

**Title of the project: Personal narratives**

My name is Kai Li Chung and I am a postgraduate research student from the School of Life, Sport, and Social Sciences at Edinburgh Napier University. As part of my PhD course, I am undertaking a research project for my thesis. You are being invited to participate in this research project. Before deciding to take part, please take the time to read the following carefully.

This is a piece of research on people's life stories. We are interested in making sense of how people make sense of their own lives. We are collecting life stories of adults from all walks of life, and we are looking for commonalities and differences in those stories that people tell us. The findings of this research will be useful, as they will aid our understanding of how people make sense of the events that happen in their lives.

We are looking for volunteers to participate in the project. You are welcome to take part if you are aged 18 or over and are able to speak English fluently.

On the basis of your questionnaire responses in phase 1, you have been invited to participate in phase 2 of this study. Today you are asked to take part in a face-to-face interview. You will also fill out a questionnaire after the interview. Participation in this phase of the study will take approximately 60 minutes in total.

We are not aware of any risks associated with taking part in this project. You are free to withdraw from the study at any stage without having to provide reasons for doing so and without any consequences.

To ensure confidentiality, all data provided will be securely stored in a secure filing cabinet and on computers that are password protected, to which only the Director of Study, Dr Kathy Charles, and I have access. These will be kept until the end of the research project, following which all data will be destroyed. You may withdraw your data from the project at any time up until 1st July 2016 after which time it will have been included in the anonymous analysis and so will no longer be traceable.

The information from this project will be used for the write-up of my thesis. The results may also be published in a journal or presented at a conference.

This research is being funded by Edinburgh Napier University.

Thank you for reading this information – please ask any questions if you are unsure about what is written here.

If you have read and understood this information sheet, any questions you had have been answered, and you would like to continue and be involved in this project, you will first be asked to sign a consent form to confirm this.

If you do not wish to be involved in this project, thank you very much for your time and attention.

**Researcher Contact Details:**
Kai Li Chung
School of Life, Sport, and Social Sciences
Edinburgh Napier University
Sighthill Campus
Edinburgh EH11 4BN
E-mail: k.chung@napier.ac.uk

**Supervisor Contact Details:**
Dr Kathy Charles
School of Life, Sport, and Social Sciences
Edinburgh Napier University
Sighthill Campus
Edinburgh EH11 4BN
Telephone: 0131 455 5039
E-mail: k.charles@napier.ac.uk

If you have any questions/concerns, during or after the investigation, or would like to contact an independent person who knows about this project but is not involved in it, you are welcome to contact:

Dr Phyllis Laybourn
School of Life, Sport, and Social Sciences
Edinburgh Napier University
Sighthill Court
Edinburgh EH11 4BN
Telephone: 0131 455 6017
E-mail: p.laybourn@napier.ac.uk

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**Consent Form**

**Title of the project: Personal narratives**

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above project and I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation.

I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this study and that I have the right to withdraw from the project at any time, without having to give a reason and without any consequences.

I understand that I can withdraw my data from the project at any time up until 1st July 2016.

I understand that any information recorded in the investigation will remain confidential and no information that identifies me will be made publicly available.

I certify that I am 18 years old or older, and I consent to being a participant in this project.


Name of participant        :        _____
                                    (PRINT NAME)


Signature of participant   :        _____


Date                       :        _____

**Appendix 6.1**

**Life History Interview Schedule**

This is an interview about the story of your life. I am interested in hearing your story, including the parts of the past as you remember them and the future as you imagine it. The story is selective; you do not need to tell me everything that has ever happened to you. Instead, I will ask you to focus on a few key things in your life – a few key scenes, characters, and ideas. There are no right or wrong answers to my questions. Your task is simply to tell me about some of the most important things that have happened in your life and how you imagine your life developing in the future. I will guide you through the interview so that we finish it all in about an hour or less.

This interview is for research purposes only, and its main goal is to understand the different ways in which people live their lives and the different ways in which they understand who they are. Everything you say is voluntary, anonymous, and confidential.

I think you will enjoy the interview. Do you have any questions?

**Critical Events**

I would like you to begin by thinking about your life as if it were a book or novel. Imagine that the book has a few different chapters, and each chapter represents a key event that stands out in the story. As a storyteller here, think of yourself as giving a plot summary for each chapter. A key event would be a specific incident or a significant episode that took place at a particular time and place. Consider a key event to be a moment in your life story that stands out for some reasons – perhaps because it was especially good or bad, particularly vivid, important, or memorable.

We will consider about eight key events. For each event, describe in detail what happened, where you were, who was involved, what you did, and what you were thinking and feeling in the event. I also ask that you tell me why you think this particular event is important or significant in your life. What does this event say about you as a person? Please be very specific here.

**Event #1: Peak Experience**
Please describe a high point in your life story. It would be a moment in which you experienced extremely positive emotions, like joy, excitement, or great happiness. What happened, when and where, who was involved, and what were you thinking and feeling? What impact this experience has had upon you and what this experience says about who you were or who you are?

**Event #2: Nadir Experience**
This is the opposite of what you just described. Thinking back over your entire life, try and remember a specific experience in which you felt extremely negative emotions, such as despair, disillusionment, anger, terror, or guilt. You should consider this experience to represent one of the 'low points' in your life story. Even though this event is unpleasant, I would still appreciate an attempt on your part to be as honest and detailed as you can be. What happened? Where and when? Who was involved? What did you do? What were you thinking and feeling? Also, please tell me why you think this particular moment was so bad and what it may say about you or your life.

**Event #3: Turning Point**
In looking back over your life, it may be possible to identify certain key 'turning points' – episodes that marked an important change in you or your life. If you feel that your life story

contains no turning points, describe a particular episode in your life wherein you went through an important change of some kind.

**Event #4: Earliest Memory**
Think back now to your childhood, as far back as you can go. Please choose a relatively clear memory from your earliest years and describe it in some detail. This memory does not need to be especially significant in your life today, rather what makes it significant is that it is the first or one of the first memories you have. Perhaps you may want to choose the earliest memory for which you are able to identify in detail what happened, who was involved, and what you were thinking and feeling.

**Event #5: Important Childhood Scene**
Now describe another memory from childhood, from later childhood, that stands out in your mind as especially important or significant. It may be a positive or negative memory. Why is it important?

**Event #6: Important Adolescent Scene**
Describe a specific event from your teen-aged years that stands out as being especially important or significant.

**Event #7: Vivid Adult Memory**
Moving ahead to your adult years, please describe an event that you have not already described in this section that stands out as especially important or meaningful.

**Event #8: Wisdom Event**
Please describe an event in your life in which you displayed wisdom. Perhaps one in which you acted or interacted in an especially wise way or provided wise counsel or advice, or made a wise decision. What does this say about you and your life?

## Stories and the Life Story

Next, I would like you to think a little bit more about how some particular stories might have influenced your own life story. From an early age, we all hear and watch stories. Our parents may read us stories when we are little; we hear people tell stories about everyday events; we watch stories on television and hear them on the radio; we see movies or plays; we learn about stories in schools, churches, synagogues, in the neighbourhood, with families and friends. I am interested in knowing what some of your favourite stories are and how they may have influenced how you think about your own life.

**Television, Movie, Performance, Books, Magazines: Stories Watched and Read**
Think back over TV shows or movies you have seen from the media, or books, magazines, newspapers, and so on. Please identify one of your favourite stories, tell me what the story is about, why you like it, and what impact it has had on your life.

**Family Stories, Friends: Stories Heard**
Growing up, many of us hear stories in our families or from friends that stick with us, stories that we remember. It could be family stories parents tell their children about, friends telling stories about themselves and about others. Try to identify one story like this that you remember – one that has stayed with you.

## Personal Ideology

Now, I would like to ask a few questions about your fundamental beliefs and values and about questions of meaning and morality in your life. Please give some thought to each of these questions.

**Religious/Ethical Values**
Consider for a moment the religious or spiritual aspects of your life. Could you describe in a nutshell your religious beliefs and values, if indeed these are important to you? Whether you are religious or not, you could describe your overall ethical or moral approach to life.

**Political/Social Values**
How do you approach political or social issues? Do you have a particular political point of view? Are there particular social issues or causes about which you feel strongly? Please explain.

**Change, Development of Religious and Political Views**
Please describe how your religious, moral, and/or political views and values have changed or developed over time.

**Alternative Futures for the Life Story**

Now, we're going to talk about the future. I would like you to imagine two different futures for your life story.

**Positive Future**
First, please describe a positive future – what you would like to happen in the future for your life story, including what goals, dreams, and hopes for the future. What do you hope to accomplish?

**Negative Future**
Now, please describe a negative future – a highly undesirable future for yourself, one that you fear could happen to you but that you hope does not happen.

**<u>Reflection</u>**

Thank you for this interview. I have just one more question for you. I'm wondering if you might reflect for one last moment about what this interview, here today, has been like for you. What were your thoughts and feelings during the interview? Do you have any comments about the interview process?

**Appendix 6.2**

**Debriefing Form for Participants in Study 3**

Edinburgh Napier
UNIVERSITY

**Debriefing Form**

**Title of the project: Personal narratives**

Thank you for taking part in this study. This debrief form explains the purpose of the study in which you recently took part. If you would like withdraw your data from this study as a result of this, you may do so at any time up until 1st July 2015 after which it will have been included in the anonymous analysis and so will no longer be traceable.

This study intends to find out how a type of personality can influence language. Much can be learned about people of different personalities by close examination of language. We are particularly interested in the speech use among individuals who score high on the narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy scales.

At its extreme, narcissism is characterised by an elevated sense of self-importance, lack of empathy, and an overwhelming need for compliments and admiration. Extreme Machiavellians are emotionally detached, cunning, and are capable of pursuing self-interests through dishonest means. Psychopathy typically reflects high impulsivity, behavioural problems, and the inability to feel remorse. However, research has found these to be potentially adaptive features, as people with such personalities can be very successful in organisations. Some researchers argue that these personalities appear on a spectrum of traits that everyone possesses to varying degrees.

Linguistic methods of manipulation are common in everyday interpersonal communication. All of us utilise language in a way which reflects favourably on ourselves in certain contexts, such as job interviews and political speeches. It seems that people who are high on narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy scales are very capable of charming and impressing others using persuasive language. Do people with these traits adopt a unique language style?

In this study we attempt to examine the language style of people with various personalities. This study involves two phases. In phase 1, 100 participants complete the Narcissism Personality Inventory, MACH-IV, and Hare Self-Report Psychopathy, which measures narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy respectively. After ranking them according to their scores from the highest to the lowest, three high-scorers are selected and invited to take part in phase 2.

In phase 2, each participant takes part in a semi-structured interview with the researcher. These life history interviews consist of questions about the past and current events.

It is hypothesised that people with higher narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy scores possess a unique language style compared to the low-scorers. The analysis is merely a comparison of data collected from a non-clinical sample.

If you are concerned or worried about anything that was brought up in the study, then you may wish to talk to someone about this. It could be a person you feel comfortable talking to. You may consult your GP, or if you are a student of Edinburgh Napier University, you may wish to seek advice from the counselling services.

**The Counsellors and Mental Health Adviser Contact Details:**
Edinburgh Napier University Merchiston Campus
Student HUB
10 Colinton Road
Edinburgh EH10 5DT
Telephone: 0131 455 2929
E-mail: counselling@napier.ac.uk

Feel free to contact me or my supervisor if you have any questions. Thank you again for taking part.

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## Appendix 6.3

## Interview Transcripts

## Interviewee 1

### Peak Experience

Ehm... I was at a festival, I—I was with a bunch of my friends, and we were experimenting with some drugs [laugh]. We tried…uh I can't really remember the cocktail, but we had some trips involved, ehm, and I was—I was in a tent with my boyfriend at that time and a couple of his friends… and… I—I can't really describe what I was seeing but I can kinda describe what I was feeling... erm, I just felt particularly happy and there was no, obviously no real reason for it, it was—it was induced by drugs, but it felt like everything was a lot clearer… ehm I'm trying [laugh]—I'm trying to describe it, ehm… I don't know, I just felt a lot… a lot more positive about my life, and looking back on other experiences of my life, I felt like they didn't matter, like no matter what negative things that had happened before then, I was in such... such a state that I was just, just so happy about everything. Everything was just positive and nice, and.... fuzzy, I guess [laugh].

**I:**　　At that moment you felt quite happy about things and felt that you didn't have any worries, do you want to just talk a bit about what felt… afterwards, possibly?

Ehm… Later on in the night, erm, I started to calm down, and then I was thinking like, aww those feelings weren't real, maybe it was just me thinking that way because of the drugs, but then… a couple of days later, I was thinking back about the whole experience as a whole, and I just thought, it might have been induced by the drugs but at the same time, at that time… I was completely believing that everything was fantastic and… I don't know, when you take those kind of drugs it just, it just makes you have a different outlook on everything, and for me it was a really positive experience.

**I:**　　Do you mind telling me what those drugs were?

Ehm I'm trying to remember what it is exactly that we took, I knew that we had, we had ketamine, ehm…oh god what else, ehm… cause we were mixing it with something else. [pause] I can't remember… I just remember ketamine and… other things.

### Nadir Experience

I've got a couple that—that would be relevant. I guess the most relevant that's had the biggest impact on my life, erm, I was around… 10, 10 to 12 years old, and I had some pretty bad experiences with my granddad. He wasn't a particularly nice guy, he was a… paedophile? Is the most accurate word I guess? Well that's the only word to describe him. Erm... and yeah, he molested me for a period of time. I know you said a specific event, but as a whole, erm… yeah, so whenever I would be at the house, he would, you know, come at me. Ehm, and obviously it was pretty negative [laugh], erm, I used to associate my grandparents' house with, you know, being a child, being happy.... erm but then that obviously changed—changed the whole perspective. Ehm… and I eventually told mum what had been happening, and she, she confided in me that it had been going on with her as well when she was a child, and obviously she had lived with him, so it was—it was to a much, much greater extent with her. But I had went to her before it gotten too bad? If—if that make sense [laugh]? So when I told her, we've decided not to go down there, we would just cut off contact. We went to the police, the police didn't do anything, so… yeah [laugh] it's probably the worst part of my life.

**I:** Do you think… What—what were you thinking? Did you think you wanted to, when you made the police report, did you think you wanted him to be… caught? You know what I mean? Did you want to have, like a resolution?

Definitely, I want nothing more for it to be resolved. When I went to the police, I was all for, you know, going to court, testifying against him, but the police said that because what happened to me wasn't enough, and the stuff with my mum was so long ago, they—they couldn't really take it to court, and if they did, it would probably just be more hassle than what it would be worth? And my mum was happy with that, she—she's like I wanna forget about it, that's it done, it happened so long ago, but for me it was still so recent, and obviously I was so angry that I found out that it happened to her as well… So, yeah, I've always, I've always thought about trying to follow up, but obviously it's just been so long and there's no point, but it's [pause] I don't know, it's just really annoying that it has not been resolved.

**Turning Point**

My turning point is probably pretty recently. I—I met my boyfriend, ehm…through Tinder, actually [laugh]. We've been going out about six months now. When we started going out I was, I was pretty depressed, I was at a pretty low point of my life, ehm, but he—he's really positive, he's really motivated, he goes to the gym a lot, he's like big on body building and weight lifting and stuff, and… honestly it's such a good thing—he got me into it and so I'm now every second day I'm at the gym, I'm eating better, I'm—I'm thinking more positively about myself, and just, yeah, it's definitely my turning point, I'm more focused on uni, I'm more focused on going to work, just more motivated in general, so…

**Earliest Memory**

My earliest memory, I think it was going to see Lady and the Tramp at the cinema with my mum [laugh]. I think it was in my fourth or fifth birthday, and that was what we did for my birthday, we went to see—see the film and… ehm, me and my mum, we're not very close anymore, like we got a pretty bad relationship, but, at that time obviously I was so young, and we were really close, and… I just remember watching the film and… eating popcorn with her, and just… yeah. Having a good time.

**Important Childhood Scene**

[pause] Uh I don't really remember a lot of my childhood. Ehm… what did you say it was called? Childhood scene? [pause] I heard, sin, oh well [laugh]…

[pause] I don't really have any more childhood memories.

**Important Adolescent Scene**

Ehm [pause] Can I—can I use losing my virginity?
So I was fifteen at the time, and a bunch of my friends were like, ohh we can't believe you're a virgin, you have to change this. So they were like, we want you to lose your virginity by this certain date, and I was like… errr, okay? I mentioned it to one of my exes and he was like, well, if you're comfortable with it we could do it. I was like, cool, get it out of the way, get it done with. Uh when I meant get it out of the way, I didn't think it would be out of the way so quick [laugh]. It was quite an interesting experience, erm, it lasted around three minutes, and he stayed in my house for like two hours afterwards. I think it just really impacted my views on sex. Like at that time I was like, oh… is that it? I guess it's not a big deal as everyone says. But then obviously as time went on, I've realised that, not every encounter is going to be like that [laugh].

**I:** Was is a particularly positive—or was it kind of like, an indifferent kind of feeling?

Yeah it is definitely, definitely, indifferent. But it's made for good stories, so it's—it's pretty interesting I guess?

**I:** Do you still keep in touch? [laugh] This is a personal question but….

Actually, yes. We still keep in touch and he's actually working where I work now. So I get to bump into him the hallways, which is… pretty funny [laugh].


**Vivid Adult Memory**

Ehm… [pause] A couple of years ago, I think it was the end of my second year university, or was it third? No, this is my third year. At the end of my second year university, I was in a pretty low point, as I've mentioned [laugh], I was pretty depressed. And I failed two of my modules, but I passed the rest, [unintelligible], so they wouldn't let me resit the year. So I had to just wait and then resit the exams that I failed. Ehm I went and told mum this, and she was not supportive at all, and I couldn't work at that time, I've been signed off sick, so… obviously I couldn't get money from the uni, cause I was like coming to classes, and I couldn't get any money from the government, cause I was still considered a student, erm, and obviously I couldn't work. So I had no means of income, and my mum decided that she would kick me out of the house. So I was homeless, I was staying with my boyfriend at that time, I was in his halls of residence, cramped in a tiny little one bedroom room. So I was staying there, I had no money, I had to completely rely on him. It wasn't really a particularly good relationship, erm, eventually I got out of it, and when I came back to uni I was able to move back home, but yeah, that was probably the worst point in the past couple of years, just having to completely rely on somebody else, and I was not independent at all.

**I:** So, uhm, you were talking about moving back home, are you back home now?

Yeah, I'm back at home just now.

**I:** Do you want to talk a bit about your relationship with your mum?

Ever since the incident with my granddad, we've had a terrible relationship. We're just… we just, don't get on, there's just so much tension, aggravation, and... Yeah, she's just, at the moment she's just—she's just I don't know, honestly, she's just so annoying. She, erm, she works part-time, and the rest of the time she lies in bed, and just sits on her computer. I understand being depressed, I understand not wanting to do anything, but, she gets her meals cooked for her, she gets the house cleaned for her, and she still complains about everything. And I'm like, I work, I go to uni, I go to the gym, I go to my friends', and I still have time to come home and like, cook for you, clean the house, I'm like… how can you live like that? [laugh] I just, I just don't understand that kind of mentality.


**Wisdom Event**

It's another tough one [laugh]. I wouldn't really consider myself wise. A lot of people are used to come for me for advice like for relationship problems and things like that, but then considering some of the bad relationship choices I've made, probably not the best person to ask. Erm…when I've been particularly wise…ehm… I had—I had one of my boyfriends live in with me, and the relationship wasn't going well, but, it was a good living situation. But eventually I wised up and I decided to end the relationship, I guess, it's not very wise is it?

**I:** Well, if it was a tough relationship…

It was a tough relationship in the sense that I kind of lost feelings towards him but he still had them for me, so it was a pretty tough breakup, erm, I felt like I kind of broke his heart, but at the same time, I was wise enough, to know that it was for the best.

## Stories Watched and Read

The one that came into mind first is really embarrassing [laugh]... I think I was around thirteen or fourteen when I started watching it, it was a programme called Charmed, I don't know if you've ever heard of it?

**I:**     I used to watch it, how is it embarrassing? [laugh]

I don't know, whenever say oh I used to watch Charmed, people are like...[laugh] I was a die heart, and I watched all of them, but you know what the story is about, three sister witches, with powers, erm, I don't know why I related to it so much, cause I'm and only child, I have no idea why but maybe it was just the kind of feeling of family, like they were so close, and I didn't really have that, so maybe that's why I connected with it. Erm, I don't know if it has influenced my life, I don't think I go around believing in witches or anything [laugh], erm, but I guess it took up a significant amount of my time when I was younger. I don't know if it impacted my life, but, you know. The closeness they had, I kinda, I like that.

## Family Stories, Friends: Stores Heard

Most of the stories in my family when I was growing up was mostly just about how rubbish my grandparents were [laugh]. Uhm…uhm… yeah there's plenty of times when my mum would be like, "oh if I have done that when I was younger I would have got smacked about", and I was like, cool, well don't do that to me. Erm, actually, I have thought of one. My mum, when she was younger, she—she snuck out to go play, like a—like a, ehm, playground or something… erm, I think it was quite late and people were like playing with bonfires and stuff like that. And some girl like, lit a stick on fire, and was waving at her like a mongo, erm, she chucked it up in the air, it came down and hit my mum right here [pointing at corner of eye], like honestly it was so close to her eye—you can see the scar, and if it had been like that little bit over, it would have taken her eye completely. And she always used to tell me this story, she'd be like, "ohh don't play with fire". Yeah, it's really scary how—how close it is, every time I look at it I'd just be like, "you're so lucky you still have your eye".

**I:**     How do you feel about playing with fire?

Funnily enough, it's… I've not taken any heat from it. I'm still like, oh flame, cool! [laugh]

## Religious/Ethical Values

Uhm… Despite appearances [she had a tattoo of a cross on her chest], I'm not religious. A lot of people assume I am, I am not religious in the slightest. When I was younger, I was like, "oh mum, we should go to Sunday school". And for a while we were really into it. Then I just kinda thought, I don't really, don't really believe in any of it. So I stopped going. So did she actually. Ehm… but yeah, I think, I think religion is nice to believe in it, and obviously, I'm not gonna say anything to anyone who does, and not gonna be like, "oh you shouldn't believe that". I just personally think that it's all stories made up and passed from people to people, and just… it would be nice, but… it's not [laugh].

**Political/Social Values**

OK. Ehm… I've recently become a bit more interested in politics. My first vote was the referendum, I voted yes. I'm—I'm a big supporter of the SNP I think I'm gonna vote for them in the general election. But other than that I quite like the Green Party, I took an environmental module this year, and I've always been kinda like, oh no, you shouldn't tear down trees and stuff, but I never really thought about it much, but the module really really made me think, I'm just like there's so many environmental issues going on out there, and people are like, "oh no we have to go to war". Why? We could be doing like, so much better things with the resources… ehm and we talked quite a bit about poverty as well. And I just—I just find it hard to believe that in today's society, you've got people who are being paid like thousands for being like a CEO of a company, and then you've got people begging on the streets, like can't even get a meal. And I'm just… I just don't understand what went wrong. Like how we as a society get like this?

**I:**      Do you think there's anything that you could change about it? Or do you think, it's life?

I think it's pretty much life, I don't think anything is going to change. It's quite pessimistic isn't it? I think—I think for a very, very long time, it's—it's been like this, but if you think like the hunter-gatherer days… everyone was kinda equal, they all shared their resources, looked for food, but then as society's developed, we've become more social I guess? It's just, it's just turned into whoever has more money, is the best. So yeah, I don't really think it's gonna change. I think people are always going to be greedy and stuff but it is what it is.

**Change, Development of Religious and Political Views**

I don't really think my morals have changed, like I still think right is right and wrong is wrong. Erm, obviously, my religious beliefs changed from not being religious, to being religious, to not being religious again [laugh]. And obviously politics, it's becoming a bit more important. But overall… I don't know, I guess my morals have kinda changed. Like, when you're a kid you don't really know what morals are, you don't really care, but as I've—I've gotten older, I've got a more defined sense of right and wrong. Ehm [pause] yeah. It's more defined.

**I:**      Can I just go back to what you've mentioned at the start of the interview? Ehm, like you said, you know what's right is right and what's wrong is wrong. Do you think that has an impact on how you behave, in the sense that, just because you know that something is wrong, does it sort of deter you from doing it?

I think it depends on what it is that the wrong thing is, like obviously drugs aren't the best. But I've dabbled, ehm, I'm not into drugs at all anymore. So, I guess my morals have changed on that, but at the same time, I still don't view drugs as the biggest wrong there is. But, yeah, I don't know, I'm thinking about it, you're making me think now [laugh]. You're so thought-provoking.

There's some situations like, I don't know if you've heard of the Belo Monte Dam? In one sense I'm like, yeah, Brazil, economic growth, that's fantastic, but at the same time, should it really come at the cost of like tribes havin' to move out, and degradation of the environment and things like that. So I don't know, I don't think everything's so black and white. There's definitely like grey areas. But I think [pause], I don't know how to put this. Ehm, I think the majority of people will tend to go more towards the black areas of morality as opposed to "oh, we'll be good", cause they're more interested in getting what they want. So… I don't know but I guess it's human nature, people will always going to be like that. But [pause] I don't know, I'd like to think that I'm quite a moral person. Like, I stand by what I believe in, even though my morals have changed, but, yeah.

**I:**      Do you think it's changing for the better then?

Yeah, definitely. Definitely. When I was younger I used to just think, oh whatever, I'll do whatever I want, but now, I'm a lot more strict, so definitely for the better.

**Positive Future**

Hmm. [pause] I'm thinking [laugh]. I mean, I'm doing a Psychology degree, but on the one hand, I'm like I could do something with Psychology, but on the other hand, I really want to be a writer. Uh I used to do a lot of creative writing, but obviously with uni, it's taking over but… so I don't know, I think my ideal future would be, like, little cabin, out in the woods, very minimal living… erm, just, just writing. But obviously that's not very sustainable, you need like income and stuff. But not thinking about that, I think, I think that would be the kinda life that I would really, really enjoy, but, apart from that, just having a good career, a family, not children, I'm not, I'm no, no, I don't like them [laugh]. I don't really like them.

**I:**     What is it that you don't like about them? Is it the responsibilities that come with them or is it because you just, no, can't stand children?

I just, I just don't have any like, parental instincts? But I just—I just don't like the idea of childbirth, being pregnant, it just, freaks me out to be honest.

**I:**     You don't think these ideas would change, do you?

No, I've always thought, I don't want children, I don't like children, I don't wanna have them. But I mean, everyone has always said, "oh it might change when you get older, you get broody", and I'm like, yeah, they can be cute sometimes, but having to deal with them all the time, urgh… not for me, not for me. But… I don't know, I've always said, if I did decide I wanted to have children, I would probably adopt, I'd probably adopt one that was like partially grown, that was you know, funny and cute. But [laugh]…

**Negative Future**

Stuck in a dead end job, like an office job, just… doing whatever just to make ends meet, just, things like that. Also, when—when I was a bit younger, like—like four years old, I was always like, what if I ended up being a drug addict, like [laugh], the thought of that is just so scary especially now, like looking back, like, to think I could have got hooked on drugs. I could have just been like a completely waste and done nothing with my life. But yeah, just a future like that, is just really dismal. So, I'm glad things are [unintelligible].

**Reflection**

I forgot the first half of the interview [laugh]. I don't know I thought it was really interesting. It made me think a lot, it made me think about how these kind of experiences have impacted my life. Ehm… I'm thinking if I've left anything out, anything big—you said at the start, imagine your life is a book, and having different chapters. Erm, I grew up without a dad, erm, he—he left, before I was born and he's never been interested in contacting me. The closest father figure I had obviously was my granddad growing up, and then that… w—wasn't good. So after that it was probably my downstairs neighbour. I've lived in the same house, apart from when I was kicked out, for 21 years now, and he, he'd lived there for all of that, until he died. He died a couple of years ago, I got these roses [pointing tattoo on her harm] in memory of him. He was, he was a really good impact on my life, he was just always so, just so happy, and I've always got like little memories, and every time I walked up the path I always just remember, oh that time we did this, that time we did that, and, yeah, it's just really nice. So I'm—I'm glad that I have had a father figure at some points in my life [laugh], even if some of them have been better than others. But, yeah, I think it's a pretty important part of my life. But I think, I've just come to accept the fact

that I don't have a father figure, I'm not really gonna have one, and people would be like, "oh you've never met your dad, that's horrible!" I'm like, oh yeah, it's probably a really bad thing for people, but I've just, it doesn't bother me.

**I:** Do you not think that you want, at some point, to contact him?

I've actually tried to contact him once, and he just ignored me. So I was just like, well, that's that. I was, I think the reason I contacted him, I was more interested to see like, what he had to say, and just what kind of person he was. And his reaction showed me.

**I:** Do you know about him at all?

Ehm, I know his name, I know that he's married, he's got other kids, and that's about it [laugh]. I couldn't tell you like his profession or anything.

**I:** I mean, do you know about his general character?

No, not anything, no.

**I:** Would you change anything about your life if you could?

Very interesting question [laugh]. Ehm, there's probably little bits of my life that I would change, like, I probably wouldn't go out with that one. But, bigger events, like the ones that we've talked about, even though a lot of them were horrible, I don't think I would change them cause obviously they've made me who I am, and at the moment, I quite like who I am [laugh]. So, even though bad stuff's happened, it's… it's meant something, in a weird kinda way I guess? [laugh]. So yeah, I don't think I would change a lot.

**Interviewee 2**


**Peak Experience**

Uhm… In 2013, I've always had back issues, but I had never really thought about it. And then 2013, I just did too much, and I passed out one day, and I had herniated disc on my spine. And it was really sore but I didn't really think about it—it's one of these things I kept saying I'm fine I'm fine, and I went to hospital and it was not fine. They operated there and then. And, I, thought nothing of it, but suddenly all my friends and family were there for me. They came to the hospital to see me, they brought me things, they came to my house and took my dog out for me, they did my shopping for me, and looked after of me, and I was just, stunned, I was like, all these people actually care about me, and want to talk to me. So like all these messages "are you sure you're okay", "how are you", "what happened", "can we see you to make sure you're okay?" And I was like, wow.

**I:** It's funny how a negative experience can actually—

Yeah, it was kind of overwhelming, but then afterwards I was like, "holy crap, this is good!" It was surprising, though, surprising to me, I didn't expect it.


**Nadir Experience**

Uhm… I had found myself in sort of a relationship that I thought I would never be in, because of how I grew up and my mum's relationships. Uhm, but I woke up one day and felt completely worthless and useless, it'd been building for a while. Erm, this must have been about 2009 just before I came here, erm, when I was at college... And, erm, I had no purpose. Uhm, I was doing nothing, nobody would employ me. Erm, I did have somewhere to live, barely, but it was a really really horrible area. Uhm, and the person I was with was just using me to cook the food and, it was just horrible situation, erm, somehow I'd managed to become very distant from my friends, I've been cut off and isolated from everyone, so I remember just lying there wishing that there was some way that everything could stop. Erm, and then there'd be no more pain, no more anything.

**I:** Do you mind elaborating a bit on this? How long were you with this person?

Twelve years. By the time it had finished, yes. But that was the turning point, where I started to make things change. So I was at a point when I realised there's two things that can happen. Either you sort this out, or you don't sort it out, and what the consequences of those two actions would be.


**Turning Point**

I can think of two key turning points. One's connected to what I just said. Ehm… at that point, I was at [College], and my tutor, my, like guidance lecturer, had noticed that there was something wrong, and she said "are you okay? What's wrong, you've missed classes", erm, she says, "to be honest, you look miserable". And I was like oh [laugh], okay, thanks. And she sent me to the guidance department. Now when I spoke to the woman there, who's still my friend, this is like, I don't know, six, seven years later, eight years later, and now we go for coffee and we're actually friends. She recognised, that, I don't know, that I could, I was really clever, and I could go to uni, and she says "don't drop out of college, you need to, erm, be stronger than that, you're better than that. And she helped me, got me to the doctor, medication, therapy, got out of all that, ended up in uni, so that was a big turning point. And then as a result of that, through going to uni and everything else, I completely changed my life. Overall.

**I:**     Was that the second one?

That was the second point, yeah, because I could have continued where I was in that relationship. But there came a point, where I thought, actually, no. Cause I thought I don't deserve any better, I can't get any better, there's no point, and I thought well if I leave, I lose my house, my pets, my car, I will have nothing. And then I realised that's the wrong reason to stay. There's better things in life. So that was the second turning point.

**I:**     You were talking about your relationship. Uh, was it a relationship that was—it was probably because there was nothing going on and you had to depend on this person? Could you explain a bit more about how you felt about that relationship in particular, if you don't mind?

That relationship's a strange one. This was someone who I met and, instantly thought, wow, this is someone I want to be friends with. And then we ended up [cough] dating, and ended up moving in together, and going out. And then I always knew this was someone who had mental health issues… What I didn't realise was how bad that could be to the point that it was abusive. It was like, ehm, do you love me enough to make me toast? I was like, but I have homework to do, I have, I need to go out. And it was "don't go out, don't leave me, I can't leave the house. Do you not love me enough? Do you not care that I'll be all lonely in the house?" Do you know? And it got really really negative.

**I:**     You said it was abusive. Was it mental abuse?

Yeah. Yeah. It was draining. And you don't see it coming. Cause twelve years! You really don't see it coming. Till the point you think, oh… that's what's going on.

**I:**     Yeah - twelve years is quite a long time. What I was thinking is, did you realise that only towards the end of that period, or was it something that sort of gradually developed and you've noticed it quite early in the relationship?

I… in—early in the relationship I wanted to help. And then I didn't realise that you know, you can't love someone better. You can't fix someone for them. Uhm, I wanted to help. Because, you, someone I love was suffering. Really suffering. I thought, I'll do everything I can to help that suffering. But everything I could ended up taking me. Completely. Erm, so that wasn't a very good thing. And, it took a long time because we would go to talks and we'll try and work through things, but we're covering the same ground over and over again. So, like you said you would try. And erm, at one point, we had a dog. Because the idea was a dog gets you out of bed in the morning, a dog gives you a reason, you have to go out with the dog, well that didn't work. And then one morning, erm, my partner turned and said, I have nothing to get out of bed for. And then I realised I wasn't a reason to get out of bed. I wasn't a reason. So that was kind of ouch.

**I:**     Was it a good breakup?

Erm… [pause] hmm [pause] from my point of view it was? Because I was lucky enough to have so many people around me, that I would just able to say no I'm not taking this anymore. Uhm, but then actually, I ended up, I didn't get to keep the dog, but I did get to keep the car and house, so… [laugh]

**I:**     Do you still keep in contact with this person?

We do, actually yes. Because erm… she's got the dog. And because I've got other pets, yeah we spoke just yesterday. That's interesting because it's been a year, but I think we're both in far better places than we were. I think we were holding each other back and pullin' each other down.

**Earliest Memory**

Yeah, I can remember eh, being in a snowsuit with mittens. I was tiny, and there was a plant pot in my gran and granddad's garden, you know you get this half barrelled plant pots leaning on it because it was taller than I was. And I remember playing at the snow and playing with my dad and my granddad and my granny and we were just playing in the snow. Erm, but I loved it, it was great fun.

**Important Childhood Scene**

The one thing that always springs to mind is that ehm, uhm, I was, about eight years old, and I remember realising my home life wasn't normal. Uhm, I could hear things going on, I knew there was a fight in the other room, and I knew that I needed to stop the fight. And I needed to get dad away. Uhm, so I started screaming at him. And then I threw a rocking horse at him. And the reason that stands out so much is because I knew what he was doing was wrong, and I had decided then nobody does that to my mum and nobody will ever do that to me. So…. I think that's make me a stronger person—does that makes sense?

**I:**     What about now then? How has that relationship developed, between you and your parents?

Ehm… fine actually. Erm, I got on well with both my parents. They're fine separately, they're just not good together [laugh]. My dad's still the same person, he's still a drunk, he's still a violent drunk. Erm, but he's now 63. So he's an old, frail violent drunk [laugh], so it's completely different.

**Important Adolescent Scene**

Teenage years. Uhm, it has gonna be high school, isn't it? [laugh] Yeah, erm [pause] high school, I hated. I had—I loved high school, I've always loved learning, and I love the structure in it. But, high school was one of these areas where I just didn't fit in at all. Erm, so I permanently had to hide from bullies and so, high school's a time where I just remembered that you're only there for a few years. That was all I focused on. Just to get out. Get to uni or whatever. Erm I was unfortunate that I got away from the bullies in primary school, just to find new ones in high school [laugh].

**Vivid Adult Memory**

One of my closest friends in the whole world… I didn't really realise how close we were and I never told him because, he was with someone else and it didn't matter. And then finally I did, to find out that he felt the same way about me. So I was in a very bizarre situation. It's—it was a best—another sort of turning point. Cause he was someone who'd been there for me the whole time, uhm, and was actually there for me. He's—amazing person. So that stands out for me.

**I:**     And how has it developed then?

Well, he's not even in the UK anymore. But hopefully he'll come back to the UK. So we'll see. But he's still my closest friend in the whole wide world. I think it's where, to find someone who you can be completely yourself. Doesn't matter what you've got to say, whether it's bad about yourself or what. And you can just be honest.

**Wisdom Event**

People seem to think I'm kind of insightful, erm, I guess it's talking about other people's relationships. When people say… questions, erm, for example online, talking to people on Facebook or on chatrooms or whatever. People sometimes ask advice, and it's being able to step back and, you can't give someone advice on their life, cause they know their life best obviously, but you give them options, you can say, well this is how I did it. Uhm, this is what's out there to look at, these are websites you can look at. And people got "oh I didn't even know these websites existed." And I think I know my way around the Internet quite well [laugh].

**Stories Watched and Read**

Ooo that's a difficult one. Uhm… when growing up I didn't really watch television, sometimes we didn't have a television. So uhm, I would go out and speak to people, and uhm… hear their stories I guess. But I can't really think of one exactly, I mean, I've always thought Disney films were strange. It's not that I don't like them I just find them strange. You know, the princess gets her prince and it's… erm, I don't know. When you grow up in areas like I did, poor areas, they're all single parent families, where the men, you know, seem to sleep around, leave kids everywhere and bugger off. They don't stay, so, Disney films are so removed from reality to me, it's ridiculous. Erm, I really like Never Ending Story though, just because I like things with animals in them. I identify with the animals [laugh], erm, [laugh]. I've always liked—uhm, if we were playing games, I remember nursery, one of the boys in nursery wanted to be the mum of the family. And I didn't think anything of it, I was like yeah you can be the mum. And the staff were like, no you can't be the mum you're a boy. And I was like, why can't he be the mum? I'm the dog. And I was crawling and barking and they were like, right, okay, you guys just get on with that then [laugh]. So I always liked to play the part of the dog or the cat. So if ever we played like, The Little Mermaid or something like that I would be one of her fish. Or if we were playing scenes from Beauty and the Beast and things like that I would be a dog or a cat.

**I:**      So you didn't—you didn't want to be the main character?

No I never wanted to be the main character.

**I:**      It seems—it seems interesting that you're s—saying that. Do you think—do you think it's because of how you grew up that sort of influenced how you think about, ehm, TV shows in general, like you feel like you cannot relate to them. Is that—has that always been with you, you know, from young, knowing these things are a bit out of reality? Or do you think "I wish I could be like that?" Do you know what I mean?

I think it's not life—I think that once you get to know people, and you get to know their relationships, you see that they really aren't like what's on television. In a good way or a bad way. Soaps are always, you know the continuing dramas, they're always very negative, it's always very extreme. And films, Disney films, are always, any film actually, is extreme the other way. There's—because it would be boring otherwise. It wouldn't be entertaining. Uhm, everybody's life is pretty much very similar, they go to jobs they don't particularly like [laugh] just cause they need money, yeah. Erm, it's not reflective of reality. I think that uhm, I've always been able to see that, yeah. The closest things I think when you get quite interesting diversed programmes where you've got erm, cartoon characters that are green, and there was blue hair. I think those ones are better [laugh].

**I:**      Because you know very well that's just a fantasy?

Well no it's more representative I think of society because everybody's so different. Uhm I remember Tots TV is being one example. It's from the eighties and so you probably would know a bit. One of the characters was F—French, uhm one of them has ginger hair [laugh] ehm, do you know they're all very different, so that's more realistic [cough].

**Family Stories, Friends: Stores Heard**

Yeah I remember a couple of things, I remember erm, a family party when I was supposed to be in bed, and I was hearing stories of where my gran grew up. Uhm, my gran… married an alcoholic and he died when my mum was seven. Uhm, and she spoke about being a single parent during like, the fifties and sixties, uhm, how difficult that was. Erm, and I found out from my gran why all my aunties and cousins, h—have issues and why they're all so messed up [laugh]. Erm, she—I remember her talking about one of her sons. One of her sons had schizophrenia and my gran, even back then, this was in the forties, he was diagnosed with schizophrenia and of course nobody really knew what it was, he's been institutionalised since then, but she knew that she had to do something, she had to get him away from the rest of the family, so she did well. She'—erm, she's both a strong person and a weak person, I know that sounds strange, she is. She is very easily led [laugh], my gran.

**I:**      How do you feel about the stories that you've heard?

Erm, interesting, because, other people's families seem to be more balanced in my view. Uhm, my family seemed to be very negative about each other. They're all, competitive, and they always want to pull each other down. And I can see that's being unrealistic as well. Erm, it's bizarre to find sisters that hate each other that much but yet are friends. It's like, why would you do that? Why would you constantly stab each other in the back? [laugh]

**I:**      Do you feel that has influenced how you treat people? And how you interact with people?

Yeah, I think in a positive way, because I see them and the—this passive-aggressiveness. When you go "Oh that dress is lovely", you think "you don't mean that? You're being really evil to your sister. How can you do that to someone you're supposed to love?" So I try and be honest. I try and be always honest in my life. I try and find, erm, I remember reading a book, erm, so many good books, actually. About an astronaut's guide to life on earth which I read a few years ago. And I feel the author says that one thing you learn from living in space is how to live on earth. If you can't help someone, if you can't make things better, aim not to make them worse. So aim to be a zero if you can. And that—I think that's good philosophy.

**Religious/Ethical Values**

Ehm, I grew up going to Sunday school sometimes but I'm not religious. Erm, I think spirituality has a place, like mindfulness, I think it has a place. When people had communities, they had a community around them, social network. Now in the individualistic culture we live in, we've lost that and I don't think that's a good thing. Uhm, so although I don't necessarily believe in heaven or hell, erm, I would like to believe that this isn't all there is. Erm, like when animals go I always think they've left here but they've gone to Rainbow Bridge, and when I die I'll go up there and see them again. And that's how I like to think about it. But I think these things have a purpose because they help us survive, do you know? When things go wrong, but even people who are not religious start to pray, start to believe in something, or try and hope or wish for something to, what? To their own heads, because there is nothing. But it's something that helps us. Because when you feel helpless and you can't do anything, that's something you can do. Or like, sending healing thoughts to other people. Obviously it doesn't actually help, but it might, because this person knows you're doing it, they can feel loved and supported and it can maybe help. And then you don't feel helpless, because you feel like at least you've tried, you've done something. So I think it has its place.

**Political/Social Values**

Yes, my mum was a community activist so I grew up going to rallies and uhm, holding placards and shouting things. Erm, but as an adult I've done a lot less than that, there are things that are important to me, I find it ridiculous that some people can just go out and buy a car, and other people can't even buy milk. I remember working in a supermarket, I worked in Lidl up the road, and erm, we were supposed to stop all shoplifters. But I remember a woman stealing baby food, uh she was trying to hide it in a buggy, and I'm like, I'm not stopping her. Erm, stealing is wrong, but that isn't wrong to me. Stealing baby food isn't wrong, if she had to steal, I don't know why, maybe she'd spent her money on drugs so maybe it was wrong, but how do you stop someone stealing baby food? To me, the supermarkets earn a profit, they can, ehm, they have a budget, they can write off so much per month. And it's just written off, it's like ten percent or something, something stupid like that. They don't even care about that, if there's anything more than that, they start saying to the staff "why are you letting people steal things, why are you breaking things" [cough] but before that they don't even notice. So yeah, why not? [laugh]

**I:**     So you think there's a grey area?

I don't think anything in life is black and white. You see things like, erm, you shouldn't cheat on your partner, it's wrong. Is it? Why? There's so many grey lines everywhere. Erm, if you break a personal agreement with someone, if you actually specifically say to someone "I will not sleep with anyone else", then you should stick to it. That is your moral grounds. If you said "I will never steal anything", you have to respect your own boundary, and w—who you've said that to. Erm, the laws that the government make, we trust these people to make these lines in the sand, and they decide where they fall. Erm, like legalising drugs, they've decided for the greater good of everybody, but I don't necessarily think they're right.

**I:**     What about marriage?

I think people look at it wrong. Uhm… often people get married and think that's the end of the work. They don't realise that you have to work on relationships, constantly build, keep moving together, develop together, uhm, and, it's just a bit of paper at the end of the day. You need to actually put personal weight to that bit of paper, and believe in it. And if you don't, if you get married for another reason, erm, then that's, I guess, as long as there's communication between the two partners, they say erm they want to get married because they want to spend the rest of their lives together, but what does that actually mean for them? How does that look for them? Because people don't communicate enough sometimes, I think. I mean I guess it's difficult to say some of these things. But if—I read a survey a while ago erm, it was [unintelligible] students, and there were asked what things meant, like what does cheating actually mean, they all had different definitions. And that's interesting—

**I:**     Do you mean cheating in relationships? Not cheating in exams?

No, no cheating in relationships [laugh]. Some of the students said you know like, if you kiss someone drunk in a night club, it's just a kiss it doesn't mean anything. And other people were like no, my partner's not even to like look at another person, erm not touch them, you should never be holding hands with another person. Very different, erm, different types of cheating as well. Physical and emotional. Uhm, so the emotional one sometimes comes at worst, cause if people feel someone has an emotional attachment to someone else, so it's good to communicate and decide what those things are.

**I:**     Do you mind telling me your stance then?

Yeah, that—no—that's exactly it. I can over-communicate with people I think. Because I want to know what they need, what they want, why, where we can meet in the middle, how this can work, how we can make it work. Not just assume. Because I think when you take things for granted and you assume, things can go wrong because you start to lose each other, uhm, so it's

good to know, ehm, and also, if someone's willing to meet me in the middle and compromising things, and there might be things people aren't gonna compromise on, like a deal breaker for me, I don't want children. Erm, so I have to say to people right from the start, if you really do want a family, probably best we don't go any further than this.

**I:**        So adoption also is a no no?

I wouldn't mind adoption so much. But not actually having children, no. So erm, I wouldn't want to uhm… that's an interesting one for people [laugh], like "so you would adopt a child but not have one?" Yeah [laugh].

**I:**        But are you pro-choice or pro-life?

Ehm no—I think people should choose. T—this is another grey line thing though. Uhm I know a lot of single parents who believe they can trap a man to staying with him by having his child. And I know—my flatmate has had two abortions. Had the morning after pill f—four times. That's laziness. That's wrong. If it wasn't for the NHS, she'd been a mess, and that's wrong. And yeah, she should be more careful.

One of my closest friends, his partner is very very jealous of him having female friends. She considers that to be wrong that he would have female friends. I don't know why, but uhm… sometimes friends cuddle up and watch television together. Doesn't matter if they're girls or if they're a girl and a boy, or does it—does it matter? So yeah, I think these things need talked about.

So many people join the army or work on oil rigs and come back to find that their wives have cheated on them. But if they had an agreement, they wouldn't have cheated. It would have been agreed upon, if the people involved could say "right, I'm gonna be away for six months of the year. If you wish to go out and have fun at that time you can." And they risk losing their wife, but they risk losing them anyway, if you're gonna lose someone you're gonna l—lose them.

**Change, Development of Religious and Political Views**

Uhm… the sort of spiritual, religious stuffs, erm, kind of easy to talk about. Uhm, mindfulness has really helped me, uhm, through talking therapies and through learning just to think about things more. To stop and think about things more. Erm, one of the research things I've looked into was panic attacks, and I found mindfulness does work. So that was why I looked at it. Erm, the other one's political views—I think it's interesting when you grew up in a poor area, where you see people stealing baby food and you see how bad it can get. W—When the government talk about cutting benefits and, I get annoyed because it's three percent of their expenditure. It's barely anything. And they're focusing on that. They direct the media and the news away from the real news, to areas of society that yeah need help, but aren't the problem. So it's interesting. I do get annoyed with the government. [laugh] I have no idea how to vote because they're all really bad. I mean, my mum is very much a political person, she'd be like yes, she used to do erm stuff at the Labour party, go out and get people to vote and pull for the Labour party, but now the Labour party is so awful she won't… but erm, and also you know, women fought for the vote, yay I'm a woman I should vote [laugh].

Erm… one of the things that people say in the news is that, people who can vote, but hardly anyone does. There's ways you can go to the polling station and what's quite common is that people would spoil the vote. They wouldn't actually vote for anyone, they'll draw a penis on it, or something like that. Because, the number of people gone into the polling station still counts. The number of spoilt ballots they can then look at, and it means something. It means that they're taking a stance. Choosing not to vote but they're choosing to go to the poll—polling station and say, it's a loud voice, say I am here [laugh] but I'm not voting for you. And drawing a big X on it or a smiley face or whatever and spoiling it.

**Positive Future**

I have a very, erm, I have a two-year plan, I have a goal that I'm aiming for. Erm, I'm hoping that my best friend can come back and be with me. I'm hoping that we can have a house together and a dog, and [laugh] cause he's got a dog, erm, and I'm hoping to get a good enough job. I don't want loads of money. I just want a nice job to get a house in an area that isn't having needles everywhere and drugs, that would be nice. And I know he really likes going on holiday and really likes exploring the world, so I'd like to explore the world with him, but I need to be earning enough money to do that. So that's my plan. Postgrad soon, careers advisory, go out, get a job.

**I:**      So you're planning on doing a postgrad?

Yes, I've got a uhm, ehm, conditional place, erm for here to do the careers advisory. So yeah, career advisers don't earn a lot but 25 grand a year, it—but it's better than working at Lidl when it was seven grand a year, do you know? It will, it will be nice.

My mum's disabled. She had an accident when I was fifteen, and is disabled, I have to help with tablets erm, sometimes I have to help her shower but not that often. Erm, I guess that might have been a turning point in my life [laugh], I've never really thought about mum's been disabled for that long that it's just the way, and I'm her carer. This means that she does need someone to look after her. But the government said, you have to be looking after someone 35 hours a week for them to help you with your rent. To look after someone 35 hours a week means she also gets help, erm, or in the house, or money to help her. But that means I can't do anything full-time, cause you can't have two full-time jobs. So I can't earn any more than a hundred pounds a week. [cough] So I literally can't earn any more than a hundred pounds a week. [laugh] So, uni is nice, and I've said a few times, only way to get here and stay here as if they would help, and the fund, the student f—fund, they've got an independent student living allowance, which is 75 pound a fortnight or something like that, so they give me that, so that was excellent. It's not available in postgrad, so, erm, I think eating is overrated? I don't know [laugh] how I'm gonna do in postgrad, somehow I'll find a way. But I've been applying for jobs recently, I'm not qualified to do any of the jobs, there's a few sort of managerial positions I found that I could apply for but they want you to guarantee you'll be there a year, and I can't be there a year I can only be there till September and then go part-time, so I have no idea. Uhm I might have to go back to Asda, and it's depressing to be in university—I've been here you know five years to go back to work in Asda? That's horrible but I might have to. Yeah… just money. Money is money.

**Negative Future**

If I failed the undergrad, if I failed it, then I will be stuck in a job, a soul-destroying job, like in an Asda checkout, erm, where I just don't want to go to work. Ehm and it's horrible when you've got a job that you hate that much. The only options of job that you hate that much. What do you do? This is the other thing I understand about poor people getting a mess with drugs and things because if your only option is to work in one of these places and erm, you'd probably find like your management and your bosses aren't that great. They've not been to uni, they don't know things and the kinda building with the brick work there where your way or the highway sort of thing I don't want to, that'd be my idea of hell. Erm, to be stuck in a council state again for the rest of my life. Because council states are not nice places [laugh].

**Reflection**

Uhm I couldn't remember what exactly the interview would be before I arrived, eh I've been doing so many other things I could have read back the emails but I didn't [laugh]. Uhm the only thought I had was, uhm, when you first described the questions and what you'd be asking, I

knew then there will be some things that I was gonna say that would be really negative, so I thought that would not be very nice for you. But other than that, no it's fine.

[cough] I think that, uhm… my story's not rare. T—the areas I grew up in it's normal. Everybody has the same things, I mean erm, there's things in primary school where, I grew up in an area with a lot of drug dealers. They use their children too. So I was offered drugs in primary seven when I was ten years old. Eleven years old. That's normal, it's normal for the area, it's not rare for me. Uhm when I refused the drugs she stapled my hair to the wall. But that's normal, uhm, my class wasn't allowed out till the scissors were signed back in. Imagine a school where all the scissors were signed back in. That's normal. Erm there's four or five schools in the area, and then there's one big local high school, but all of the people—imagine how many hundreds of people go through that high school, that is their lives, they're used to it.

Ehm I think people don't realise—if somebody's growing up with a family who, erm, a working class, or a middle class family where their parents, anything, they've proper jobs, they've a proper house in a nice area, you see these things up on the television programmes, Jerry Springer, [unintelligible] and all these things, and you think that's them, that's something that happens, I don't think you really connect and see how we're all connected and how we all affect each other. Uhm it must be difficult because our views are a product of our experiences, how we grew up, maybe they just don't see it. But it's kind of insulting somebody goes "aww, what a horrible life you must have had" No, it was just a life. Everybody has their problems and especially to a child, uhm, maybe their turning point was their gran dying or something, it would have felt really horrible to them. Uhm everybody has those things. Whether one person's worse than somebody else's it actually doesn't matter.

**I:**      Would you change anything about your life then if you could?

Uhm… probably not, because if I did, I wouldn't be who I am, and I wouldn't have done what I have done, or learned what I have. So those things have had a purpose. Whether or not I still would have done as much as I did without them or not, t—too difficult to tell. Erm… but I think at the end of the day, what we have to go through doesn't as m—matter as much as what we take out of it and where we go from there.

**Interviewee 3**

**Peak Experience**

So, just to recapitulate the question, umm, a—a moment when I felt the most happy in my life, right? A peak event. Umm… [pause] I'd say when I graduated college. Umm so, that was in [Country] in [State], and the reason why that was a high event was because I was always lazy to study my entire life, yet for three years in my life I decided to change my attitude and study a little bit more cause I liked what I liked. Umm, so and then you asked who wa—who were there. It wasn't at a point that I finished my defence, but it was at the point that I was at my convocation. I was leaving the stage and I saw my parents being really happy and my dad looked like he was on the brink of crying, and my mom trying to smack him on the side of his head going like "stop crying don't be an idiot". Umm… that was actually probably my happiest point in my life so far. And I felt really well-achieved because I scored the highest in my class, I was valedictorian of my graduating class and it also set the pace for the rest of my life to becoming what I am right now because if I did not achieve what I had achieved I wouldn't be doing this PhD.

**I:**    You were saying that… you were saying that your dad was in the brink of crying. Is that his first time that, somebody graduated at home or is it—

It's the second time, it's just my brother did not graduate with a first class. I was the only one in the entire family so far, and he was on the brink of crying because I was the last person that was going onstage which means that I was the highest scoring and the—the—the theme that we had at our university was that no one was allowed to clap for anyone else unless if you got a first class. So he was—he was on the brink of crying that when I saw him after we finished, he was crying. Umm… even when we took graduation pictures he was still crying so, but my dad's hyperemotional my mom's hypo-emotional.

**Nadir Experience**

Well, umm after I graduated, like you know, I thought I could do anything in the world and I was like alright I can apply to every school I want in the UK, because you know I thought "great, a first class honours, should be fine right?" And I got rejected by almost every single school, and that was depressing and then the schools that did accept me they were like "oh you have to pay 300,000 pounds or whatever for you to do your three-year or four-year PhD". I guess for me that was the low point because you thought you could do almost anything and then now you feel like you can't do anything and I spent almost an entire year umm… not doing—not pursuing the dream that I wanted to do after I finished my undergrad. Umm… in retrospect on the positive side of things I know I'm not supposed to talk about it is that I got to learn how to teach and my passion in teaching was just more infused in my soul if that's a term I would use. So the negative part of that entire story, I didn't get to follow my dream as immediate as I wanted to, the positive side of things is that I learnt that I really liked teaching and that I ended up having a year of discovering how much I like research as well and I decided to focus on the [Country] having enrolled in [University] soon after. [pause] So yeah [laugh], I don't know what else you wanted me to discuss on the negative part, on the negative side, did I miss anything?

**I:**    You said that, you said that you spent a year doing things that you, you said that you did not want to do it wasn't something that you like—You meant teaching? Is that what you mean?

No it was more like I didn't want to waste my time. Like I didn't want one entire year of just like alright I'm 24 years old I'm supposed to start my PhD, cause my impression was to get my PhD before I'm 30. Well I'm turning 30 this year I'm still not getting my PhD. Umm but that's not the low point of my life. At this point in my 20's one of my lowest point was I did not get into grad

school in the timeline that I proposed. That was probably one of the lowest point and the whole negative part of things was again it did not meet my timeline. That, yeah, that—that's the best I can do thinking of something negative recently.


**Turning Point**

This is actually going to be an easy answer. Umm… because… A turning point is, a turning point anniversary is coming up. [Holiday] 2012. And the reason why that was turning point was because a lot of my closest friends knew that I was gay, but I didn't tell anyone else because I always felt that it was temporal. And on [Holiday] in 2012 I was at my buddy Tony's barbecue and umm… I brought my then boyfriend with me to this party. And it was a party that I—introduced him as my friend, oh, this is, I can't remember his name right now—Ron, this is Ron…

So umm… I told, so I like I told them this is my friend that you know everyone just thought of him as my random friend, who is not in science, which is a little odd considering everyone there is a grad student or post doc. And he did some embarrassing things, he was a little unsociable because I've always been the social one and… at one point Tony was really drunk and Tony looked at me he brought me inside he literally pulled me inside because he was like three times larger than me and he said Kyle, you go over there and you sit on his lap. And I go why am I sitting on his lap? What if people find out I'm gay and he goes "I've always been your big brother and if anyone says otherwise about you being gay or whatever I will punch them in the face". And I go okay, so I went over to my boyfriend I sat on his lap, no one reacted [laugh] like it was so unsurprising and umm… and why I felt that was a turning point because that very day somehow empowered me and the very next day as how wildfire is like, that news spread around to the entire school—some people were surprised because some people really thought that I was bisexual or straight at that point but they knew immediately oh, I'm very comfortable with my life and from that day forward I felt so much more comfortable in my own skin than I ever was in my entire life that I just kept doing other things that promoted whatever my own skin was, like wearing flashy colours or umm… being extra flamboyant because no one is going to tell me you're not supposed to act that way or—yeah, I felt that was a turning point and it just set a very interesting tone for my life so far, because it just made me a lot more comfortable with who I am.

**I:**     There's lot of question I want to ask…

Sure, please, sure…

**I:**     I know I'm just trying to, you know, arrange the questions in my head. I think one of the things that I wanted to, and you were talking about, I wanted to ask is that ummm… Let me think. Did you feel that nobody reacted because everybody knew, or because everyone thought that wasn't a big deal?

The second one. I really think that they thought it wasn't a big deal. If I did that in [Country] they would have probably have gone like haaaa….

**I:**     Which brings me to my next question. Do you feel that it's probably because of where you are, you know, the location sort of because it's not a big deal in [Country]?

Definitely.

**I:**     So… do you think it has sort of impacted your life? I know, I know you haven't been back in [Country] for quite some time but do you feel that you have to act differently because you did say that it was a bit liberating in some sense in that you don't feel that you don't have to hide or whatever but do you feel that you still have to sort of put on a, a mask if you like when you're back home or do you think no, you still can, you know, that your friends should know so it's fine, you can still be yourself. So…

Okay now so if I'm understanding the question there's like two parts to the question. The first one is it because of the setting where I was in [State] that it was so much more comfortable and the second question is if I return to [Country] do I need to put on the same mask?

**I:** Yes.

Okay.

**I:**     And is it because, when you were in [State] because everybody was drunk it didn't matter or is it…

Ummm… okay so there is three parts to the question the last question and the first question sort of correlates to one another. The—the first part, the first question was, was it extra liberating that I was in [State]? Which is already crazy city to begin with, it's super fun, umm… yeah I mean if I was in a different city I mean if I was in [State] I highly doubt I would have come out at that point. On top of that like Tony was my closest friend in grad school and I trust him when he suggests for me to do anything like I literally trust him with my life, if he tells me to jump off a building I would probably say "sure, is there something down there to catch me", you know? Like I somewhat trust him with of course a little hesitation. What was the third question the one that you added on?

**I:**     Oh that was just whether you were drunk or is it because everybody was…

No… I think whether people were drunk or not it wouldn't have mattered. Like maybe the drunk part helped a little to coax everyone but essentially the very next day, people knew about it, like I walked around school and they were like ah so we found out this happened in the party that was like the highlight in the party, so even like, people were texting each other, people were Facebook messaging each other, which was very nice because you know like it mattered that I mattered, and then… the second question of like, if I go home to [Country] do I need to put on a mask, the first time I went home I put on a slight mask, I think a partial mask, after that I just, I mean I go home every year… and last year when I went home I was just like alright I'm gay so what? Like I go back to my old faculty members and I go like "by the way… remember how I liked wearing short shorts and tank tops all the time? There's probably a reason behind that." Umm yeah, that to me was very liberating because like even this weekend I had a friend from [University] that came to see me and she was completely cool with it I was like oh look cute boy, just like stopping in the street and… it's less liberating when I go home to [Country] but I'm trying my best to let what I am out because I don't want to stifle myself again. It's not healthy for me and my therapist tells me that all the time.

**I:**     You have a therapist?

Yes [laugh]. I started having a therapist a couple of years ago because I was having really bad uhh writer's block, so ummm… that was also probably another turning point, because after that I started understanding myself a little bit more. Like for instance last time I used to judge people so much now I judge people so much less, like alright, this person's doing that, why do I care? [laugh]

**I:**     How about family? How have your family members, I mean, how have they been coping with this whole thing? You know this coming out thing...

Well my mom… my dad doesn't. Because my mom keeps telling me to not tell him, like I want to tell him. I think he kinda knows. The man painted my room pink when I was twelve. You'd think the man would know.

**I:**     Well sexuality has nothing to do with pink.

Agreed, but when you think about the [Country] mind-set, colours, sexual preference and probably even like preference to style somehow has something to do with each other in that country. Very few people do not, very few people separate between the… all these different parameters, so it wasn't surprising to so many people when I went home and I went like by the way I'm gay and that here by the way I'm gay and they're like yeah you don't say.

**Earliest Memory**

OK… This is event number four, right? OK. Event number 4 was actually the first thing I had in mind when you were going through the whole introduction. My earliest memory was probably when I was three years old, I think it was three, because I was a really slow kid while I was growing up I couldn't speak bla bla bla until I was three. Umm... it was my dad giving me a piggyback, coming up the staircase in my parents' house and the reason why I remember that is because I was so close to my dad as—as I was growing up, and he was always there for me even throughout school and it just, and I—and I felt that memory has been so much etched in my head because of how much my dad was—how much my dad means to me.

**Important Childhood Scene**

Umm so a memory that I had of childhood where it could be positive or negative, potentially after six years old, before 12 years old, right? Positive or negative [pause]. The first time I did public speaking. It's either the first time I did public speaking or the first time I was brave enough to sing on stage.

**I:** Okay. Can you describe that in more detail?

Sure. Umm I guess in both aspects because I was a very shy kid until I was probably like, eight. And then I decided without telling my parents, I'm just going to do something that I cannot possibly think of doing which is, outside of my comfort zone. Umm can I describe both memories because they're similar—

**I:** Yeah, sure.

—but still dissimilar at the same time? So the first memory was when I was eight, and I sang Part of Your World from The Little Mermaid in an all-boys school on stage. That in itself was an interesting period after the fact, but I remember the memory because it was the first time ever I was brave enough to be on stage and I decide to sing, my favourite song. I wasn't a very bad singer I was actually pretty good and umm… and I remembered not looking at people unlike now which I love looking at people when I'm on stage.

Umm… yeah, because I love the energy. But at that point I was so scared of that energy and it overpowered me and I remember singing staring at the ceiling the entire time pretending I was trying to remember the lyrics and stuff, and that was very interesting to me because, one, it was positive because it made me feel like I could do something outside of my comfort zone and two it made me realise that I really loved singing, and three, I loved being on stage despite me staring at the ceiling. I continued doing this every year singing a female driven song every year and always getting number 5 or number 6 because I did not, I refused to sing any manly songs because as a—a child, your, your voice is not suited for a manly song, you don't have the vibrato. And no one understood that I—

**I:** Did you know that, did… were you…

Yes, because I read a lot when I was growing up. Like I knew about the digestive system by the time I was six or seven, like, my science teachers had hard times trying to teach me because I probably read a little more than them. So but essentially it set me up to more things and my first

public speaking was like when I was standard 4, that was, ten years old and it was the same concept. The difference is that I did singing, two years in a row, Pocahontas's Colours of the Wind when I was nine and Part of Your World when I was eight, but when I was ten I decided, I'm gonna stop this singing, I'm still going to love singing, but let's try something else and do public speaking. And the reason why I think that memory is so important to me is because now the thing that I think I do best is public speaking. And that was my first time public speaking and it was set up because of the two years of singing in public and I remember the theme was, my favourite toy, and my favourite toy at that point were two dolls. One was the pink power ranger and the other was the yellow power ranger that my brother and my mother shared to buy me at that point. It was a girl's toy, it was a doll and I carried it in my mother's rattan multi-coloured bag that I still have at home. I brought it on stage I brought the two dolls out and it was the first time I spoke in public without a script and I stared at probably half of the audience and I lost a lot of my stage fright, and now, whenever I think that I'm nervous before I go on stage, which you know is normal for everyone, I think of that memory and I go, if little ten-year-old Kyle could do this, I'm sure that 29-year-old would have no problem at all. And then like, it just sets me up to be an amazing public speaker. And I still feel that's a skill that I can put in my CV and say like, nine out of ten times I did not fail unless if I did not speak in English then I failed terribly.

**Important Adolescent Scene**

Umm okay this is going to sound super superficial but I remember going through high school always wanting to be the best at whatever I could. And there was this concept in [Country] that most kids, most other kids, were probably like, I really want to be this, I want to be president of this, I want to be that of that, I want to be this or that, like you know, you always wanted to have a position in—in a club, when at the end of my umm my, at seventeen years old I got my school colours which was great but I still felt like I didn't do anything much until I went to [School] and I decided when I entered the school I'm going to become a school prefect and I wanna be the head prefect. Like I just decided. And when I got that position I was probably the happiest throughout my entire high school life, which I know sounds really superficial and I keep repeating this but I still feel that position in itself to this day has changed my life so much because, one, it has taught me that umm, heading for something in my life is great because I always had that in mind that I always wanted to be the head prefect because that's the highest you could go in school essentially, and secondly, like once you get there, so many things do not—so many things seem so different in perspective. Like, great, now I'm the head prefect, what next? And, I was really happy and the one of the most life changing things was during that point was, I was, giving the school oath and my voice squeaked, because I was nervous.

Yeah, it was, it was my first oath giving ceremony, I was still in white and green pants… and umm… I remember my voice squeaked and I remember almost the entire student body was laughing. And I was so upset like, as soon as I was done, I tried my best not to like cry and I was—I wasn't capable of crying but you know it tried my best not to show that I was sad and I just got off the stage and I remembered the school principal going like, "if you're going to continue doing this, I think we have to choose another head prefect", and that changed me, it was just like, alright what can I do? And I got asking, I got to asking multiple teachers, multiple prefects at that point to help me with the change. Like, how do I walk differently? How do I give a different oath? How do I become more strict in the assembly? How do I get to control the entire school without making me feel—seem like a douchebag, like previous head prefect? So… and—and, that basically, Sean was the previous head prefect, no one liked him. I didn't want anyone to think I was his, you know, the person after that was exactly like him because we came from the same school. And, you know, that entire conglomerate of events changed me and it was—it was one of my most important adolescence set of events because it sets the pace towards who I am right now. As a person who can be serious and not serious at the same time. Who knows how to juggle his lifestyle, who knows that there are important things and less important things in life and who knows that if I could do that, I could do almost anything else in my life. Like getting a PhD is probably just going to be a walk in the park right? [laugh]

**I:**     Umm… just a couple of questions. One thing that struck out to me when you said, you said you're not capable of crying. What do you mean when you said that?

I'm working in my therapy sessions right now on that.

**I:**     Oh. Okay.

Uh, I'm really not, it's really hard to get to inside, induce me to cry. Like, you know watching a movie some people cry. I, the worst sadness I could get from watching a movie is seeing a dog die. That makes me really sad, I can't watch I am Legend anymore because I would cry because of that. But you know I don't cry. And the only times, like sadness immense sadness, well mostly sadness is that something happens to my parents. Like last year I was flying to [Country] and my mom was really upset with me because I forgot to text her I'm flying. So she sent me this slew of messages that made me really upset, it includes a lot of bad words as well because my mom is very open with me. And I remember being in [Airline] airport going, mommy, [imitate crying], and I started crying. But everything else I can't cry.

**I:**     But do you feel upset? Like, do you feel sad?

I would feel sad, like last year I broke up with one of my boyfriends that I felt immense about, immensely strong about. And I didn't cry. I was literally like lying in bed like, I'm going to cry, I'm going to cry, I'm going to cry, and I didn't cry.

**I:**     So it's just that physical crying that you're not capable of, that's what you mean?

Yes, yes. I can feel the sadness like I can feel the sadness in me but I can't feel it like, exploring itself into…

**I:**     Does it matter that you—

Uh... I guess it does because you know when you cry you feel better most of the time.

**I:**     Do you not feel better even though you have all this sadness and you know, how do you cope with… not crying then?

No… I actually need to see my therapist.

**I:**     Okay.

Or I go for yoga. Yeah, Like I do one of the two things to cope with releasing myself.

**I:**     Okay, then I just want to rewind back to what you said at the start. So you were saying that, uh, you really wanted to be head prefect and, and you got the position. What, did you take any steps specifically in order to get that position, or you just applied for it and you got it. Is there, some, you know, is there a process that you, that made you head prefect. Or kind of…I mean, apart from application and stuff… did you put like lots of efforts into getting that, that position?

Yeah. A lot.

**I:**     Tell me about it.

Well, uhh…

**I:**     If you remember.

Yes I do actually. I—I—I actually have a very interesting like memory recollection. Umm…so, while like looking at my wall of our first gathering over there we had, I have a picture, sorry, anyway, so umm… I remember joining the school and asking almost every senior prefect, like, how is it to become a prefect? And then next, talking to Sean which I never liked my entire school life, asking him how it's like to be a head prefect and what does it take? So and then I remember like applying to be prefect and they wanted a CV from every single student who was applying and I catered it around how I talked to Sean, how I talked to Mr Mark which was another, which was—which is uhh a Prefectorial Board teacher and having all of this input and kinda like you know, I kinda manipulated them into getting what I wanted, so I knew exactly what I needed to write my CV as, and I made whatever that I could stand out and basically blow everyone else out of the water because I knew who was my immediate competition. At that point was Cindy. So yeah because Cindy was a head prefect before. That was the closest person or Carl. So I was like alright, so I remembered also telling Carl, "oh do you really want to be a prefect again?" And somehow, convincing him out of becoming a prefect because he was the closest person to becoming—

And then somehow we had a conversation. Actually I think he convinced himself? Yes. So… I—because he wanted something else. He didn't want to become a prefect. And I knew he was one of my closest competition, but I knew academically I could like beat him out of the water as well. So it was like Cindy or Carl. So, with Carl I kind of knew I would win cause in [School] everything was about your brains and I knew in terms of brains I would beat him. Great. With Cindy, it was like a close call and I still remember to this day, we had—so they scored us based on how good you are and all these different aspects. Cindy and I were probably .2 difference in the entire thing and the only reason they picked me was because I had male genitalia [laugh].

I knew Lucy the principal liked me. Because she met me every Friday. To talk about the school and like so how can we make the school better? How can we make that better? Like I really enjoyed that because you know, I really liked the process of like how am I going to get this and make myself the best out of of like everyone else and I weeded out my competition, and I wished I still had that skill? Because I feel like I've so mellowed down that I don't know who my competition is and if I do I have this like alright you're better great just, just go and do better stuff I'll just still stick with my stuff. Umm... and yeah Lucy was really nice because she would meet me every Friday and I felt like I was not just a head prefect I was like, I was helping the students do stuff. Like we, we had the school carnival because we brainstormed the idea and we really wanted to do something that made students in the school felt like they really felt like [School] pupil.

**I:** Uh-huh.

And then like, unlike the previous head prefect where he's like everyone's a true [School] pupil there's no such thing as that and I'm like no. If you're in this school for more than three years, you are more of a [School] than I ever could be, and I respect that and that's why umm... when the school editor was coming up with—the the school magazine at that point had pictures of [School] all over, we had little pictures of [School] pupils on the cover…

The initial idea was to represent the entire… like, all [School] from different colours, different schools, different whatever you know, creed, different variety. So when we were talking about the school cover because I was involved in it, she wanted my input. She was like so what do you think if we put some of like you know people not from our school but [School] on the school cover I was like I think it would be more important if we focus on the true [School] because you know you guys spent more time in this school and you understand the school spirit a lot better than I did and because of that we decided on the school cover having true [School] on it and then having a picture of all [School pupils] that were there for more than 4 years in the school, in the, on a page in itself, in the magazine. So I was like, it was, it was such a different experience like I really liked that… I really don't know how you asked me from one question then I jumped to that story…

**Vivid Adult Memory**

I guess learning how to be independent and learning how to let go of things. Umm… and important life like… I would say moving to [State]? But then moving to [State] was… was easy, was important but it was easier compared to moving to [State] which I still feel was like a very new adult life event that has made me learn a lot of things like how to get along with different types of people. Like, learning how to be a lot more independent like moving to [State] I had no friends because, well, I'm in a lab of two people including me and the person, the other person I don't get along with especially well. Not having friends, not being, not being supported by my parents wholly as what I did have before, having to learn how to pay my credit cards on time, ummm... that's an important life event for me. Because it made me feel like I'm finally an adult, like I'm living in my apartment because I think I can simply afford it and I don't need to go like mommy daddy I need two, three hundred dollars from you like every month. And like now, knowing that if I go out every day I'm going to be spending more money, knowing how to budget, knowing how to do this like the move to [State] was an important life event for me, yes.

**Wisdom Event**

Going back to one of the memories, the one where I came out and felt a lot more comfortable with myself.

So I know this is probably, this is, this is set up towards multiple events because I felt like when that happened I became so much more self-aware and a lot of like memories that were of the past sort of came more into perspective compared to what it did before. So there were multiple times I felt like, I, I, I exercised wisdom when no one else really could. One such recent event is when a friend of mine who came to [State] to visit me from [State] and she… felt like she did not know whether to continue dating this guy long distance that she met at a conference but they went on multiple dates while she was here in [State]. Umm... how I asserted wisdom was because of the life events I went through post coming out like sleeping with multiple men from instance, that helped me in understanding her situation and telling her you know there's one thing in life that I've understood is that if you find something that you like, chase, look for it and then go after it because if it makes you feel good it's not damaging yourself it's not damaging people around you, why is it a bad thing and why are you overthinking things and she looked at me and she said are you sure you're not like, a hand of god or something I'm like if I am, great, but if I'm not, I really don't care because you know right now you're my friend and I love you and I want you to be happy and I feel like that was one point that I asserted wisdom because she was so confused and she's always been one of my friends that, that kinda grounded me and now I felt like if I could ground her, wow I'm actually not that stupid after all.

**I:** So what if it doesn't work out between…

Well I told her if it doesn't work out it doesn't work out, it's—you don't want to live in your future going like I felt this chemistry with this person but I never gave it a try because of geographical distance… geographical distance is not, is not, it's a non-issue if you feel strongly about someone. I mean if—if I could bring a friend of mine as an example, like, she, she somehow work through everything, she's married and she's still, I mean… she chased after a guy that she had geographical distance. She's married and she's still trying at it, it's going to be difficult, it is difficult. But you know it's like, the very fact that you're going after something that makes you feel happy, I don't even think of it as something selfish. I feel it's selfish if—if you're damaging everything else around you, it's like you know if you're going after this guy and you end up breaking 500 men's hearts, yes that's selfish, but like if you're going after this guy and it's helping your heart and feeding your soul and making your mind be—be—be—be—be—be stimulated everyday, like why not, you know?

**Stories Watched and Read**

I'm going to choose my favourite writer which for some reason I'm blanking on his name. Ummm… he wrote Tuesdays with Morrie...

**I:**      Mitch Albom.

Yes, Mitch Albom thank you. Ummm… I loved his book Tuesdays with Morrie I didn't really like Five People You Meet in Heaven although I thought that it was a good book that kinda showed like some people that are meaningful in your life may meet you in heaven later and some people are just like met for two seconds, somehow you've affected your life, great, but Tuesdays with Morrie felt more grounded so it's still one of my favourite books from him, even Have a Little Faith doesn't come close to it. Ummm… the reason why I like that book and how it affected my life is that you know you could have a person, a teacher, even a… sorry a person, not even just a teacher that… you may or may not have impacted their lives but knowing them further, like having character definition to every single person in your life is so important. So if I somehow feel a little connection with someone I try to have a character definition to that person. So in this story Tuesdays with Morrie, Mitch Albom goes to his old teacher Morrie and sees him every Tuesday to write his biography, and umm, he learns so much more about his teacher, he learns so much about how in depth his teacher is or how much more deeper than oh okay I'm just teaching you these few life lessons, in the end when Morrie he dies Mitch explains it in his book he describes the amount of pain that he goes through but at the same time the very fact that he knew Morrie made him feel better about himself because Morrie went away, one, knowing Mitch, or Mitch knowing Morrie and secondly having Mitch write a book about him. So when I think of that book, I think of how if I know someone I want to know someone enough to maybe write a short story about that person because you know knowing a person is a hi and a bye thing, it doesn't really matter in this day and age or at least in my perception because we have 6 billion people I can't know 6 billion people but I can know 10 people at least and knowing at least what their favourite colour is so that story taught me that every person is their own definition. And knowing a friend right now who learns of that story but not knowing about Tuesdays with Morrie he sees that as every person is like Plato, he doesn't see you ass who you are to begin with and then he moulds you based on how you are after knowing you, and I feel in tandem with Tuesdays with Morrie and this friend's Plato story kind of goes together because if you know someone in depth it just enriches your life a lot more. Like knowing one more person in your life does not make you, does not make your brain explodes, it just makes you a happier person or even a person who knows a bit more about another person, and experiencing their life experiences is just… enriches your life. So yes, that is one story that I thought was important to me in my entire life to this day.

**Family Stories, Friends: Stories Heard**

Okay, this is my grandmother's story.

**I:**      Okay.

Uh… so when I was five or six I would always go over to my grandmother's room to try and fall asleep because for some reason I couldn't fall asleep in my own bed or even in my parents' bed and she would always tell me the same story, if I'm thinking of the story I remember there was an elephant involved, there was a mouse involved, there was a little girl involved and there was a forest that I imagined was right in front of my parents' place because we lived right across, somewhat of a rubber plantation that turned into a full-grown forest, umm... about an elephant somehow being scared of a—you know seriously I can't even remember most of the story right now. But what I—what the take home message from it is that elephants have really good memories and little girls are apparently really brave and they are really smart umm… and I know it probably doesn't sound like much of a story but like my grandmother was always empower—was pro-women the entire time. Like you know, of course I was a boy she was very very happy

that my mother was the only one out of all of her children that had boys which was why she lived with us, instead of all of her other children, and uhh sounds very sexist when I say it but that story I don't know why but it resonates to me to this day to know that, you know, women are people and like gender in itself, it doesn't really matter. Like you know you could be a boy you could be a girl but I really don't give a… expletive expletive… you know, towards deciphering what a person is. And women are as good as men.

**I:**      So that's…

That's…

**I:**      That's what you think.

That's my take home message from the elephant and the mouse and the little girl running through a forest.

## Religious/Ethical Values

So first whether I'm religious or not and secondly how does it affect my approach to life?

**I:**      Well you can tell, it doesn't matter whether you're religious or not, but how do you approach life morally and ethically...

Okay.

**I:**      …spiritually.

Well I guess it does matter right now if I'm religious or not. I guess at this current moment I'm more like spiritual than religious like I believe there is a higher power, I believe that uh, having connected to this higher power makes me feel like I'm more connected to the world. Sounds very hippy of me, I'm not a hippy I'm a yuppy but you know like making me feel like I'm connected to, to, to like, oh great the sun is beautiful, god probably gave me a beautiful day today. Makes me feel like I'm a happier person, makes me feel like I have a better perspective of people, somehow having to pray every morning or in the evening makes me feel like I'm not worried about people around me because they are going to be taken care of and, and how is that my approach in life is that, no matter how bad life is bad, I'm still being protected to a certain extent, where if I'm going to fall off a tree, which has happened, I'm going to be fine. Why? Because I have a brain to know what do I do. Why? Because God gave me this brain god gave me all of these important avenue to learn about what's going on in my head when something happens when I fall off a tree, and what are the steps I need to take in order to logically not injure myself, get an infection or having to like remove an eyebrow because I fell off a tree. Uhh… that's my approach to life and how spirituality helps me.

## Political/Social Values

I feel like such a hippy in these two questions. It's like first you ask me about God and I'm like I'm spiritual I'm one with the earth and the second one is like politics, I'm probably just gonna say that I'm very liberal that way, uh I don't know if I feel strongly about one cause versus the other, um, because I have so many thoughts about different political points of view like even with [Country] right now having Jane Doe running who's supposed to be like one of the best runner forerunners in [Country] history, I still have thoughts against her. Um, so… politically I feel like I'm very liberal.

**I:**      Do you want to just expand a bit about what you feel? Just a few examples on…

Sure, like umm… okay like with Jane's case, she always tells about I feel very strongly about gay rights, for instance, and then you don't really see her do anything about it. Like I feel with her it's all talk with no action whatsoever and Jane was a really good friend of President Shalala, who was the [University]'s previous president, and you know you see her come give her talks and you know she's very wishy washy when she tells her stuff so I feel politically not strongly for her is because I feel she herself is not strong when she makes her points and views. Umm, in my own country I feel politics is not bad but it's definitely not good in terms of how it works. Why I feel strongly about it is because for instance when I was supposed to vote a few years ago, ummm, I was supposed to vote in [State] but I had a qualifying exam coming up and I couldn't vote. So, I found out that year when went home someone else voted on my behalf in [Country]! So I thought that in itself was a political digression on how, politics is supposed to be conducted. Like, why is it, Kyle Doe who is registered in [Country] to be postal voting from [State] is voting in the [District]? So yes, politics to me, I may even one day go for it because at one point I wanted to be president. I highly doubt I'll go into it but if that is the case, I am definitely a liberal person when it comes to thinking of politics.

**Change, Development of Religious and Political Views**

I've become a much more liberal person. That's, that's, that's that's it. Because like, spiritually when you grow up, when I grew up, in [Country] you always have to like, well most people unlike you have to have a religious belief or sorts.

**I:**      You eat beef?

Okay…

**I:**      Off the record?

…no, on the record. Still, like you know that is a good point because that is a point which made me evolve like it's a point of an evolution towards my spiritual belief, because…

**I:**      So when you mean liberal, you just mean that, don't think that everything has to be according…

I feel that everything has to have a reason. So like, for instance, the eating beef, I… I did not eat beef until 2012, the reason why was because all of this time people make me believe it was religious, but when I understood and I read and I talked to people and I continued reading a lot more, I understood that it was cultural. Like, why am I following a culture that's pre-dated back to like, god knows when, and I'm living in the 21$^{st}$ century. And the same thing with politics, I felt when I was in [Country] I was always right-winged. I was always thinking, oh, you know, what is, what is [Leader] doing that I am, that, that you know oh he's a [unintelligible] person bla bla bla I had all of these stupid thoughts in my head and I always looked down on people who vote against [Party]. Now I'm more in the line towards like, why can't we inside change? It is very healthy for our country to have a completely different political party being the majority compared to having [Party] which was always the majority winner from the 60's till now. So, yes I have evolved into thinking a little more outside of the box.

**Positive Future**

Get married, have many kids and I'll just stay at home and cook the entire time. [laugh] no, erm, that wouldn't be a great idea… I would feel like I died but then like every time I say this it's like something in me is like reminding me like why you're being so stupid? You're getting your PhD, why, it'll be nice to just stay at home and not think about all these other responsibilities that would be great. But, I know knowing me I would probably die from boredom. So what I imagine myself in the future, a positive thing would be I would go back into teaching which is always

something that I accidentally found that I loved and I still love and I still want to do research so much like I want to do the type of research that I'm going. However, having said that I want to have a position that would be more teaching than there is research so like a 60% teaching load and a 40% research load. So like I have to write grants maybe like three days of the week and two days of the… you know, whatever. But the point is that I want, that, that's my goal in life. I want to be career-oriented that I'm going to be happy with my job. That I want to wake up every day smiling and going like how does my data look like this morning and I wonder how my kids in class are going to react today when I tell them, pop quiz!

**I:**     That's mean!

Yes, but in terms of like that, that would be my professional positive side of things. In mostly, I guess I'm not like mature enough, if that's the word I would use to even think about like alright I'm gonna get married one day, I mean I don't think of those things. I wish I kinda did but I don't. Maybe I'm just going to be single for the rest of my life and spoil all of my friends' kids but like I don't see myself getting married in the next five years. If that happens, great, but it's like an additional point in my entire life. But if it doesn't I guess I'm just gonna do what I do my entire life, I'm just going to find my own way.


**Negative Future**

That I find no love. And when I mean love I don't mean love with a partner but love in anything. That would be an undesirable future that I wake up in the morning and I feel sad or when I go to sleep and I feel like incredibly bummed out. Ummm… whether it is my professional life that is bumming me out, whether it's my person life that is bumming me out, I, or my spiritual, whatever, you know? I don't, that's my undesirable future that I feel no love anymore.


**Reflection**

I feel like I don't need to see my therapist this week [laugh].

**I:**     I'm like half your therapist, right?

Yeah. Umm… I felt very, it was very it was a very interesting interview I actually enjoyed it very much. I'm very sorry some people chose not to answer some of these questions because I felt like you could probably even understand yourself a little bit more by insiding the elephant mouse and girl story for instance…

...which I'm going to…

**I:**     Yeah, you should try and remember what it means. Do you have any other things you want to add on, so I can understand your life story better?

I'm always led by happiness. I know that's probably like, I remember, I think someone told me this, the Id factor or whatever the one where you're only driven by self-happiness…

**I:**     Id?

Yeah, that's, that's something driven by yourself, right, or?

Okay, so my Id is my driving force, maybe, if I'm using those term correctly, because I feel like my entire life is to understand it, like the easiest is what option makes me happiest? Because that's how my parents brought me up. Like I'm doing my PhD because that makes me happiest. I did biotech because that's what makes me happiest. I choose to be gay because, well, I didn't

choose to be gay I was, am, gay but I choose to come out as gay because that makes me happiest. So I, to understand my life, it's, to understand what it is to be happy.

**I:** So if something doesn't go according to plan, or it doesn't go, you know, all bed of roses and stuff would you change it in the sense that you would pick something else or would you change the current situation to make it something that you would be happy about. For example, if you feel that you've gone into a career that doesn't really make you happy do you think you're more likely to change your career path or do you think you would change the situation within that career to make yourself better...

I'd change the situation. Because if life gives you lemons you throw it back at life.

**I:** Okay.

You don't even make lemon juice because, like, I've had situations like that. I mean even in my current PhD sometimes I wake up in the morning and I go like why did I join this lab? But I make the best out of the situation. Like, in my current situation I have days which I'm so sad because my mentor has no idea what I'm doing, but I make the best out of it because I network with multiple people and I talk to them about my work and they give me really good feedback so, in retro- in, in, in context of this, of this conversation is that if I am in a situation which is not preferably, I make it work and I make it as happy as I can. Like how am I going to make this the best possible way, it may not be option A that I really like. Like option A would have been so many other things. But like, whatever option I'm in, I deal with the cards that I'm dealt. And I deal the best that I can with it, and if I'm happy in the process, great, because that was what I was trying to achieve when I'm in the situation.

**Interviewee 4**

**Peak Experience**

Umm.... [clear throat] peak experience… I had a good week when I went—when I went on holiday. Umm… in... 6th year, the end of school, when I left school. That was quite, yeah, that was quite joyous. Just ran away to Zante. Umm, it's ahh, in Greece. And ahh...we just basically got drunk for a week and it was just a pretty carefree week. With all my friends. And… that was it, really. Just felt, quite happy the whole time. Consistently happy. Ehm, yeah that was it really. Just…. apart from it there's none been any other—I'm not really a very ehm… proud person or anything like that—I don't really have any, see things as big— like, big achievements, but that was a good—that was a good week.

**Nadir Experience**

Umm… [pause] I don't know [pause] Ahh ehm I pretended to be disabled one time. Ehm… we went to a restaurant, pretended to be disabled. To try and get some free food. And umm, we did get some free food but I felt quite guilty about that afterwards. Even though—but what it says about me is that I like, pushing boundaries, and [clear throat] havin' a joke but that joke was probably a bit too far—it's probably quite sick. It didn't… sit particularly well with me in the days after, but, it was kinda—it sounds funny but it's not actually that funny when you're doing it [clear throat].

**I:**     Could you tell me what, sort of, motivated you to do that?

Just—just, thought it would be quite funny.

**I:**     Was some of your friends with you?

Yeah, some of my friends. We… umm, started…

**Turning Point**

Umm... [pause] turning point—probably after first year university, probably. Umm… I got kicked out my halls. I had to move away cause I was… I was… ehm… I went to the—I had a—I don't know what I did. I did something the fire alarm went off and they thought it was me who put it off but it wasn't actually me. And then I went to this meeting with umm… this, uhh somebody from Napier. And just basically deliberately annoyed them until the chucked me out, of the uhh, of the halls. So annoyed [unintelligible] with my—with my friend, and then after that I just thought, I can't be doing this anymore—can't behaving so badly. Even though it is a lot of fun, but you can't be doing that anymore.

**I:**     Could you tell me a bit more about, umm, you know when you said that you deliberately tried to make them angry, just so that they would—

Yeah well I—I just didn't really like the person who's doing it. She's actually a member of staff here at Napier so I can't say her name but umm… she was umm… just—there's just  something about her I think she thought she was special—I think she thought her job was really important when I didn't think it was. I think she—I don't like people who take too much pride in what they do and think they're really important, when really she's just… anybody could have done what she did. She's just a housing advisor. So yeah I did, I just picked away at her for a while and then eventually she, she went a bit... I said umm… [clear throat] when I went in [laugh] there was three of them sitting there, I said—I made a joke about umm, how it was like The Apprentice, and I was just basically m—making jokes and taking none of it seriously. And uhh… that was

just really winding her up. And then she said I had an attitude problem, and then I said uhuh this attitude is gonna get me into Edinburgh Fringe 2015, you're invited. And s—she was almost shaking with rage and it was… it was quite funny but I did get chucked out so ultimately it wasn't like, it wasn't a success overall.

**I:**　　And what did you do after that, umm, because you said it was a turning point?

Umm… I just, I don't know. I just stop being so… deliberately abrasive to people, as much. Like I just thought about it, I just thought I don't really want to go through stuff like that again. Cause it was—it was a real hassle.

**I:**　　Was it really effortful to do that?

Nah... effortful—yeah I suppose it is kind of. Like it's—it's deliberate—it's not like a natural thing to do. You've gotta force it but at the same time that's what I enjoy. That's what I've… but, after—the reason it was a turning point was because after that I just stopped like—I didn't party so hard I didn't go out I wasn't drinking so much. And doing all those other things I just sort of… relaxed a wee bit.

**Earliest Memory**

Umm…[pause] see memories are difficult because you can't—you can… trick yourself into thinkin' it is actually a memory but it's just something you've heard and build up a sort of image of it so… I can't really, be sure of what it is but umm… [pause] probably remember being in my first house that I used to live. I've only ever lived in two houses that was just the first one of that. And just sort of… a couple of people in the room. What else about it. Maybe about three or something like that maybe four?

**I:**　　Can you remember anything specific in that room?

Ehm…[pause] yeah I can—I can uh remember, just the room. Just being in it with my mum and dad and… that's about it really.

**I:**　　Is there anything positive or negative about that? Or quite neutral?

Neutral. It's o-okay… that's probably as far back as I could go. When I was about four, maybe three. But… that's about it.

**Important Childhood Scene**

[pause] Childhood. Umm… [pause] childhood...

**I:**　　If you could describe something that's more…more vivid? Something that you could remember specifically what happened, who was involved?

Umm... [pause] I was about, what age, between—sorry, just like earlier?

**I:**　　Before teen age. Let's say, you know, about six to twelve, thirteen.

Alright OK OK. Alright ummm... Got trampled by some horses one time, umm… in the field. The horses was like little like Shetland ponies. They all trampled on me.

**I:**　　What happened?

Don't know, they're just scared I think. And they sort of ran over me. I was okay, but… I was quite—what else. That was maybe like ten or something like that.

**I:**	What were you feeling? Were you scared?

Uhh… [pause] no I don't—just… shocked, I suppose. I did get trampled by like ten horses but I was fine [laugh]. Umm… and that's really it. It's not really a good memory actually—it's not really a big thing but… that's all I have really [clear throat].

**I:**	Were you… riding the horses? Or what were you doing there?

No it just—we just—we just went to a field, with all the horses in them. I was obviously so small. Something scared them, they just sort of—sort of like ran over me.

**I:**	Did any family member find out? That you were trampled by horses?

Yeah oh yeah, I was with a family member. My granddad and dad. So I was there with them. So, we went to the field just to sort of, clapped at them, and they all, ran, ran over me.


**Important Adolescent Scene**

[pause] Probably, when I was about sixteen or something like that, maybe like early—late sixteen, seventeen. [clear throat] I uhh… just stopped trying at school. I just—I just quit school. I didn't actually quit school. I was still at school but I just stopped trying completely. Just thought it was pointless. So that was funny. That was—stood out because I was just like, I did the exams and that but it wasn't like—I—I did no study I did no extra effort. I was just like in school just to sort of, muck around, and like… but it was like a—it was like a—when I was that age I did j—I did just decide one day just to stop, or never start trying like just from like, do you know the Scottish exams? Like there's standard grades, then there's Highers. The Highers like, for that I just—I just didn't do any. I just stopped. That was a turning point because it would have been very different now if I'd, tried in school. I supposed I've not tried but…

**I:**	Could you tell me why at the particular time you felt that you just didn't want to try anymore?

Umm... yeah. It's still something I believe until this day actually. It's just like it's not a fair test if anyone was intelligent, it's like—they've not, they've not, the education system's completely flawed, like it's not… you're not being tested on your intelligence, you're being tested on your memory. And I just thought, I don't—really want to do this.

**I:**	That was what you felt at that time?

At the time.

**I:**	And even till now?

Yeah. I mean now I do [clear throat] do kinda see that but, there are values to that obviously. Advantages. Like getting jobs and stuff like that but…

**I:**	At that point in time, did you feel that if you did not try, you know, you'd probably end up in something that—did you think about that at that time?

No no… nah I just didn't care.

**I:**	H—How did you do in your exams then?

Uhh yeah… quite...umm. okay. I got mostly Bs. In exams. But I couldn't get straight As. But I didn't…

**I:**    Did it affect you in any sense?

Yeah... it's annoying knowing you can do something but then not doing it. And then like I obviously people I could have easily done it but everybody just looks at you like, nah, everybody says that.

**I:**    Do you have the pressure to do well?

To do well—umm… no not now. There's no—there's no pressure, no. But it's all just… just… se—see what you see what you can do.


**Vivid Adult Memory**

Umm... [pause] um adult life… umm... [pause] [click tongue] [sigh] there's hardly any event as such. I—I suppose umm... one of my mates was like pretty depressed, and he was just… like, really badly depressed. He was kinda like, I didn't think he was going to kill himself, but he was having a really bad time. And that was in like, that was—that was like last year, some—like, maybe like, September, October last year when I found out he was really badly depressed. And… just quite shocked when you see like, somebody could be in such a bad state but you don't know about it and they just really struggling, like, he was in a really bad place. When I just sort of, found out about it and tried to like, to help him a wee bit but… I don't know it kinda did but then, it was just a —just all like, a few of my mates I actually I found out like—asked around and a few of them had had like, actual like, problems like mental illness. Now I realise it's actually quite a common like—quite a common thing.

**I:**    What did you do to—to sort of help him or cheer him up?

Just got well I don't know—it—it just got to like. When I had like, took him to mine. Like away from the place that he was livin', because he didn't like livin' there so I just… just sort of spend a bit time with him just outside of, that town. Just enjoyed it… tried and make him see the brighter side of life. It wasn't that bad. But it was difficult times, somebody is depressed. Like, look on the bright side, cause doesn't really work like that but… I tried.

**I:**    And is he, do you think he's feeling better now?

Yeah, yeah. I think he's better now yeah.

**I:**    So you were also saying that umm, you found out that, you asked a few mates and that apparently that's something quite common and everyone goes through that. Did you feel that you went through that? Or did you feel like it's just part of growing up, if you like?

What—what? Feeling...

**I:**    Feeling down.  Feeling low at one point in your life.

Uhh...

**I:**    Because you said that, you said that you realised that it was quite common, like this kind of mental illness. Is it something that you didn't realise before?

No I didn't no I didn't really realise it before that other people like—you could feel uncertain and obviously uncertainty is quite—it can be quite, difficult to deal with that uncertainty, not knowing what you're gonna do. Uhh feeling hopele—like you can either look at it like it's

hopeless or it's… you can feel hopelessness, like you can feel excited about what that you can feel excitement like stuff's gonna happen—like I quite like stuff changing quite a lot, whereas I think other people prefer more like a… like a rigid kind of like they would like to see where they are in a couple years. Have it more planned out for them kinda thing. [unintelligible] No I don't—I don't really want that. I think that would make me fe—I think that would make me feel depressed if I knew exactly what I'm gonna do. Like, all the time, it would… it would really—it would be really boring.

**I:**     So I would imagine that you didn't—you didn't know that you were gonna end up in this university and then doing journalism like you said.

No no, I didn't even… I didn't even, like I uh I applied to Oxford and Cambridge, for, just for a laugh in fifth year in school. But umm like obviously I didn't have the grades to get in but I just applied like that's—like that, cause they all said that you got to apply, to, try and do your best so I just decided to apply for that, for a joke, but I—I didn't really want to particularly study anything, like I can't really… I don't enjoy studying, but I just went because I thought… gets you away from home, and it's like, you can't really go wrong if you get a qualification, at the end of it, so…

**I:**     Do you still feel the same now? Do you feel you're at the right, doing the right, not right, but quote and quote, in the right course, something that you enjoy?

Yeah definitely. Yeah Journalism's… perfect for me. It's a good—it's a good sort of profession to be—for me to be in, it's quite changing, it's quite umm… sort of… like ego-based as well. It's quite egotistical, it's quite, it's like competitive on a sociable—like—on like a social level as well, like being challenged—like it's a difficult enough job to do but it's also—there's a lot of like, extra little parts of the job and things that you're got to be able to do. That suits my personality like other people can't do so...

### Wisdom Event

[pause] hmm I made a real lack of decisions in my life [unintelligible] umm... wise decisions…

**I:**     I'm sure there would be one?

You'd be surprised. Umm… ahh… wise decision [pause]

**I:**     Or probably you felt that you've given somebody wise kinda advice?

[pause]

**I:**     You did the right thing, for example?

Yeah... umm... [pause] yeah… I d—don't know—I've umm... I told umm there was a f—family friend I've got. He was, what, he wanted to go to… to university. And he—well he went to university doing something he didn't really enjoy. And I just told him to just quit and just do something that he liked, that he did actually want to do. So he did, he—he quit and now's moved to a different course.

**I:**     Could you tell me what was it that he didn't like?

Uhh… it was—I can't—he was doing… umm…like a, building, surveying degree in…I'd—he wanted to do accountancy, but like, he di—didn't, he didn't wanna make that step between like, sorta being like having a year out of school, just doing nothing. So I just said like it's not the end of the world if you just got one—one year, like, in the grand scheme of things, like people living to—such a long time like a one year isn't gonna be that much, and it's not gonna hold you back

doing that—that's what I did, I just had a—had a year out after school I just… just working and just doing various rubbish jobs for a bit and then came here. So I told him to do that and he did, and now he's, he's liking it, so…

**I:**     Do you feel that just working any kind of job, is—is that a valuable experience in your life or do you think it's just like to pass time?

Yeah no, I mean I think you need—you need something to get up… to do. Like have a—something you can do in the morning. Cause spending the day doing nothing just does—just drive you insane, and obviously you're making money, and meeting people and doing stuff, so… you get an opportunity through that, through just working, that you're not gonna get sitting at home and not work. Even if it's just a rubbish job but… a boring job… but…

**I:**     You still think it's doing something, at least?

Yeah.


**Stories Watched and Read**

Umm… [pause] see I don't know... I've not really ehm… read a book. I've not read a fictional book in like about, maybe about ten years or something… so, I can't really say. I don't think they've had that big an influence on me, but, yeah TV, TV umm definitely does. Like umm… [pause] like umm… a lot of TV like—I don't—I don't watch a lot of film, but I quite enjoy some films… umm… [pause] I like—like TV programmes I watched umm, The Office, have you heard of that? Yeah. There's an American version as well. That was like, when I wa—first watched that, I thought this is like what, comedy's actually about, and this is really good. And then it sort me got interested in comedy. And I've been doing like… like I want to write comedy, TV programmes, stuff like that. So I think that's the first point I realised that I was quite, like I thought that—that's as good that it can get and I watched different sort of styles of comedy and things like that, and then in terms of films, umm… I don't know, there's not really been one film, it's been like a stand out film. I quite like umm… a film called American Psycho. It's like a—it's like a black, black, umm comedy. I think that's quite good. Christian Bale and that. It's dark, but it's really funny. Like when he hits a guy with an axe, brilliant.

**I:**     Could you tell me why—why do you feel that this kinda dark comedy actually makes you… you like watching this dark comedy?

Because it's—it's re—it goes against your nature, like you don't want to laugh at something like that. But, yo—yo—you find yourself laughing at it and you wonder why you doin' it. It's just [unintelligible] strange sensation, of knowing that something's wrong, but also being right at the same time.

It's a film, it's representation of ideas, so you can't feel guilty about laughing at it. But, like the idea of a guy like, in that film, he does some really strange like… he thinks that tramps are just a drain of society, so he just kills the tramps, umm… [laugh] that's just—the idea that, seeing a tramp is just nothing, and just go and kill her. Seems quite a—it's obviously completely immoral but…

**I:**     I think many films actually depict that kind of thing, like if you're… sort of a burden to society, you should be killed off?

Yeah. [laugh] No I mean, you really do need to help the tramps. A lot of times I wouldn't say it's their fault but… killing them is not gonna help.

**Family Stories, Friends: Stores Heard**

[pause] Umm... there's one that my granddad told me about. Umm, a friend of his, his dog, he—he went out umm, shooting. Like he just shoots rabbits. And when you ahh… shoot rabbits like you shoot them, and then the dog runs out and like, retrieves and brings the rabbit back? And umm, yeah the dog that wasn't— his friend had a dog that wasn't doing it—wasn't doing something right, so he shot a rabbit and then waited till the dog got out there and then shot the dog. It was with a, it was with a shot gun so it's not like—didn't kill the dog it just sprays the bullet. So he had like [laugh], it had like [laugh], he basically shot it in the arse, with his gun [laugh], with his bullet, just to teach him a lesson. That's quite a funny story. And then he... [laugh] so yeah, so that's one. That one that he's got. There's a few from my granddad and he's got quite a few funny ones.

**I:**     Do you want to just tell me a bit about that?

Yeah, what else did he do. He put a… an old a football, like he took a rock and put it in the football, and waited till his boss, like him and his friend waited till his boss came along, put the football down like right in the middle of the corridor, and then obviously like a lot of people if you see a football you can't help but kick it. And then he kicked it he broke his foot so [laugh]. Done a lot of bad stuff. I think that's what I get it from. The bad—the bad streak.

**I:**     Do you think?

Maybe, I don't know. See we're quite similar. I find that quite funny as well but obviously [laugh] the guy did break his foot so it was kinda a shame but…

**Religious/Ethical Values**

Ehm... [pause] I'd say… I don't know I used to think I was atheist. Like up until the age about like, eighteen nineteen, I used—I used to always argue with people who believed in God and just like try and persuade them otherwise that it was wrong, like it was just—it's not real. But umm… I stopped doing that, cause it's like you can't ultimately change the views. And, I don't—overall, like you can't… if you looking at it scientifically you can't be atheist fully because like there's—like I'm 99 percent sure there's no God, there's like—I can never be a hundred percent sure so you can't really— you're kinda agnostic in that sense, but umm… and then there's sort of like—I was reading some stuff about theo—like theories of collective like consciousness and things like that. And like, a lot of that just sounds like nonsense to me, like the whole like idea like we're all one, like connected by this like… but umm… nah I do, I think there's a part of the human brain that's got like a, not a soul, but there's a part of the human brain that like, is aware of its—self. Or is unaware of itself. Like kinda your, like your subconscious like there is something there that is not… like it's always gonna be there kinda thing but I wouldn't say like I'm completely… spiritless.

**I:**     If somebody tells you, or tries to convince you that there is God, what kind of arguments do you use against that?

Ehh… nowadays like it's just so… it's just so much the mainstream to not believe in God. I just say to people like look at your upbringing. Like, do your parents believe in God and 90 percent would say yeah—well I—I'd say m—more than that. Like I'm pretty sure most people you meet now, who believe in God will, their parents have believed in God, it's like just like a sort of indoctrination thing, like. Like, I've never been forced either way like, I probably have slightly… m—more been told that there's no God, but I mean I've been to like, like church organisations like when I was younger. Like, where I'm from like I've read a lot, not a lot, but like, I've read the bible before and like, in school and things like that, and it's just… I just don't believe in any of it.

**I:**        Would you tell people off now? Or do you just accept?

Ehh… I would if one was really annoying me. Cause there's so, there—there's sort of people who I th—I—I—I believe like… the people who annoy me most aren't like… are just Christians, like White Christians, because they're like the people I've grown up with, being around. So it'd be like unreasonable to be annoyed at like a Muslim, uh for following Islam cause I don't really—I don't know mu—as much about Islam as I know—so it doesn't really annoy—if I saw a Muslim it wouldn't really annoy me, I wouldn't try and argue with them, but like a White Christian who just share a similar life that I had that I have, then I sort of say like, c'mon.

**I:**        Because you feel like you know it more?

Yeah I know it more and there's like different… it's—it's not taken as seriously, overall. Christianity and Islam aren't taken anywhere near as seriously. Like Christian's don't really believe in God themselves half of them I don't think.

**I:**        You think they don't practice what they preach?

Basically yeah.

**Political/Social Values**

Yeah [laugh]. Umm… [pause] yeah I do. I'm—I'm left wing, sort of, like most students probably just sort of left wing, uhh liberal-minded but I don't really actually have a… I don't have—I don't think anybody should have political regions. I think that's a stupid idea, because I think, like if you stick with one, like here in this election you got people who are loyal L—Labour voters who are possibly making a decision to vote against themselves, policies which help them just because they are loyal to this party so I don't think you should vote anybody in politics. I think it's a stupid idea. But I mean obviously you need, to have party memberships to get money for your party to try and spread the message around so, you just use them as a vehicle to transition between different political points of views and movement, so I'll vote SNP today. I have voted. Umm I already ehm sorta voted SNP but I'm not a fan of the SNP, particularly—I just know that if that's the way things continue probably drag everything further to left, so that's my political view.

**I:**        Could you describe how your religious or moral or political values have changed or developed over time?

Ehm… [pause] yeah I don't know I used to be a lot more passionate about it than I am now. Like I just think, that you can get yourself really stressed out about it, but on an individual level there's nothing really you can do like I—I'm at a stage now that it's just—you vote, and then you just like, that's realistically no matter how much you write about it speak about it, unless you're actual, involved in the political system itself, you can't actually make that much change. Even like, even like they've looked at umm… they've done research into like, if—if you read the same—if you read a newspaper article or an article online like how—how much it influences people opi—people's opinion and likely it's very little because you've got your own stance on things, so even if you read something you don't just take in, and agree with what that person is saying so. Like as a journalist like I—I am like disillusioned with the whole thing I just would rather like—I vote, do my bit, and that's it. The rest is just, I think there's too much noise, there's too much—everybody tryna to put in their opinion but that's…

**Positive Future**

**I:**        I know you've mentioned that you don't have anything planned out ahead but—

Yeah umm… umm... I don't know, I like to have a sort of… I'd like to move away from here. Move away from Scotland first of all, maybe move to umm Manchester or London, move, just try and travel around a bit. Have—have a job that allows me to travel around. Umm… try and get something some—get something written—like I've never really like—I always talk about writing comedy, but I've never—like I do stand up. But I've never done umm I've never actually tried to write a script or like a, like TV series, I need to actually sit down and properly do that and then obviously like, you need somebody who—who you can write with, and try and get something good and then get it on TV or whatever.

**I:**      You said you do stand up, would you like to continue doing that?

Yeah… but I don't—I don't think I'd like to do it as a… like I just do it for fun, like I don't think umm, I don't think it's a sustainable, it is like—there are people who you do see who do it for a living like, in Edinburgh and stuff, and it's like maybe like 30 grand a year job, you're working every night pretty much, saying the same things over and over again. And it's just, like there's travelling around, like it's—like it's pretty unhealthy. Doesn't look like—I wouldn't like that side of it. Like I like to travel around but it just seems pointless what these people do. Like really boring, and I'm better than them anyway so…

**Negative Future**

Uhh… m—moving back to Aberdeen and getting a job within like oil and gas industry. That would be—that would be just the worst thing I could do. Cause ultimately like it's not gonna go that wrong because like I've worked there before, like for a company, like I've got experience. My dad works, my uncle has retired now but he did work like, knows people—I can just get a job through like [unintelligible], like a good job. Like that's a good enough job but I'd be like in Aberdeen, and it wouldn't be a very fun. And I wouldn't be making the most of my talent so I'd be just wasting it, pretty much.

**I:**      So with the talents that you have, what do you think you could do out of it? Do you think you're going through the right career path at the moment?

Yeah, no yeah, I think so I think you just get—once you're in the—I think once people are out of university they have to actually focus on what they actually really want to do. And then you just do something, like you just try and progress with—you obviously have a stable job, but then try and, you know, you just start getting little bits of experience here and there and then working your way up and just… especially in media, it's difficult because you've got to really— it's all about making a name for yourself and doing things like that so hopefully I can do that, and make an instant imp—like I usually leave—make sure I leave some sort of impression with somebody, even if it's just one of just disliking me. Like that sometimes I can think that they…

**Reflection**

Ehm… yeah, I thought it was—I thought it was good. I hope you get the right sort of research. Cause I was aware when I did the allocation online, like I answered something like, because they are those sort of questions that you can't—there's set criteria, you can't give, like sometimes you've got to say yes when really it's something in between. So like, my only—I was just completely honest, so maybe you got like more, extreme data from my thing. Cause I thought like there was a question like umm, like, what was wrong with it… it was like do you see an animal, like if you see an animal in distress, is this—is this like whatever to you, do you like feel really sad? Well I don't actually feel that sad it's an animal  [laugh] I don't why, but that makes you sound like some sort of like, psychopath but, I answered them honestly so I just wanted to see what it was—it was about. It was quite good. But humans in distress, yeah definitely. If you've ever heard a noise of a pig, being hit by a taser. Listen to it, YouTube it. Pig tasers. It's

quite a funny noise [laugh]. Yeah I mean, delete your history afterwards make sure you do that, but yeah. Google it. Very funny.

Umm. I just—yeah. I just really like, having a laugh. I just think you should always try and have a good time. Have a good laugh. But some things important like research [laugh]. But ultimately you just try and have a good time. Not take it too seriously. Cause you might die in a few years, you never know. Hopefully you don't. Hopefully I don't, but. Cause I could get killed. I don't think I'm gonna take the underpass on my way back I think I'm gonna walk across the road so… that's it.

End