



**University of Dundee**

## **Editorial for the special issue**

Kowalski, Christopher M.; Plouffe, Rachel A.; Rogoza, Radosław; Schermer, Julie Aitken

*Published in:*  
Acta Psychologica

*DOI:*  
[10.1016/j.actpsy.2023.103899](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2023.103899)

*Publication date:*  
2023

*Licence:*  
CC BY-NC-ND

*Document Version*  
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in Discovery Research Portal](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*  
Kowalski, C. M., Plouffe, R. A., Rogoza, R., & Schermer, J. A. (2023). Editorial for the special issue: "Exploring the dark side of personality beyond the Dark Triad". *Acta Psychologica*, 235, Article 103899.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2023.103899>

### **General rights**

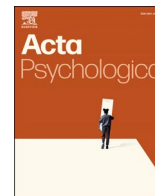
Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in Discovery Research Portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

### **Take down policy**

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](https://www.sciencedirect.com)

## Acta Psychologica

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/actpsy](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/actpsy)

## Editorial



## Editorial for the special issue: “Exploring the dark side of personality beyond the Dark Triad”

Since [Paulhus and Williams's \(2002\)](#) seminal paper introducing the Dark Triad (subclinical narcissism, Machiavellianism, and subclinical psychopathy) as a cluster of socially malevolent personality traits, interest in ‘dark’ traits, their measurement, and their associations with relevant outcomes has risen exponentially. More recently, the Dark Tetrad of personality was introduced to include subclinical sadism within this cluster of constructs ([Chabrol et al., 2009](#)). Given that many of the relatively recent horrors of the twentieth century were caused by human malevolence, it is unsurprising that there has been an increase in the number of investigations in this field. The purpose of this special issue was to expand on the dark personality literature and to address fundamental empirical and theoretical issues associated with these traits.

In this special issue, two empirical reviews offer substantial contributions to the dark trait discourse. Specifically, [Kowalski et al. \(2021\)](#) provide a comprehensive picture of the dark trait literature as a whole and identify some key controversies, such as the definition of ‘dark’ personalities, putative redundancy of the traits, validity of various models of dark traits, as well as methodological and statistical issues in the literature, to which they attempt to clarify and provide suggestions intended to understand the debate in these areas. [Kowalski et al.'s \(2021\)](#) review can serve as a primer for researchers, practitioners, and laypeople who wish to become more informed about the science of malevolent traits, as well as a snapshot of the current state of the field. [Turi et al. \(2022\)](#), on the other hand, provide a more narrowly focused and in-depth review focusing on dark traits as they relate to deception. Specifically, [Turi et al. \(2022\)](#) investigated the differences between the Dark Triad traits with respect to deception detection and production variables, as well as the differences between various conceptualizations and assessment procedures underlying these variables. Furthermore, [Turi et al. \(2022\)](#) posited that including the Dark Triad traits in investigations of personality and deception may be empirically useful. In addition to these comprehensive reviews, articles in this special issue focus on links between the Dark Triad and clinically relevant variables, as well as psychometric advancements in the measurement of dark traits.

### 1. Empirical evaluations in the special issue

In keeping with researchers', clinicians', and the public's widespread interest in the Dark Triad and Tetrad, five articles in this special issue assess the relationships between these traits and relevant outcome variables. One research area of practical importance reflects the links between dark personality traits and experiences in intimate relationships. In their article, [Ferreiros and Clemente \(2022\)](#) evaluate the associations

between the Dark Tetrad traits, facets of moral disengagement, and variables relevant to romantic relationships, including the number of sexual partners, infidelity, repetition of infidelity, and pornographic consumption in a sample of 308 university students residing in Spain. The authors conclude that their study contributes to the literature surrounding how dark personality traits predict negative romantic relationship. Furthermore, [Ferreiros and Clemente \(2022\)](#) indicate that their findings will be helpful in developing violence prevention policies and intervention programs demonstrating that negative relationship experiences, such as infidelity, contribute to individuals' moral disengagement to justify their potentially harmful actions.

The Dark Triad is also relevant to workplace experiences. These traits may not only contribute to our understanding of counterproductive workplace behaviours, but the traits also demonstrate the potential to reduce positive workplace experiences. In their evaluation of employed individuals from Portugal, [Junça-Silva and Silva \(2021\)](#) assess the ability of the Dark Triad traits to moderate the relationships between workplace curiosity, performance, and positive affect. Specifically, the authors investigate whether the Dark Tetrad traits impact the mediating effect of workplace performance on associations between curiosity and positive affect. According to the authors, the findings may be useful for hiring managers who seek to identify individuals who score low on the Dark Triad traits and who are curious about their work as the individuals may exhibit higher levels of job performance.

A relatively understudied topic in relation to the Dark Triad and Tetrad traits reflects membership in university and college Greek-letter organizations (GLOs). [Kay \(2022\)](#) describes the importance of evaluating the links between antagonistic traits and GLO membership, as the Dark Tetrad traits have been related to enjoyment of short-term sexual relationships, a desire to enhance power or status, and the potential to engage in degrading or dangerous behaviours, such as initiation rituals. In their sample of American university students, [Kay \(2022\)](#) assesses the relations between the Dark Tetrad traits and sorority and fraternity membership, which has implications for the safety and well-being of students who are involved in these organizations. The results demonstrate that those higher in grandiose narcissism are more likely to be GLO members, those higher in Machiavellianism and sadism are less likely to be members, and that scores on psychopathy were not significantly associated with membership in sororities or fraternities.

An additional applied setting deals with the mental and physical health impacts associated with the COVID-19 pandemic as well as self-reported adherence to containment measures, such as compliance with hygiene recommendations and social distancing requirements. [Grežo and Adamus \(2022\)](#) investigate the mediating role of motivation in the associations between personality traits and adherence to containment

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2023.103899>

Available online 31 March 2023

0001-6918/© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Elsevier B.V. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Personality traits assessed included the Dark Triad and additional malevolent trait measures, including those of emotional manipulation and selfishness. Grežo and Adamus (2022) also measured adaptive traits, including Kaufman et al.'s (2019) Light Triad of personality, in addition to sympathy, altruism, and empathy. The authors concluded that communicating the importance of saving lives may help those scoring higher in more benevolent traits to engage in more compliant behaviours associated with reducing the risk of COVID-19, whereas it may be more difficult to motivate those scoring higher in dark personality traits to engage in these behaviours. Nevertheless, the authors recommend that developing and employing strategies designed to motivate those scoring higher in the Dark Triad to adhere to containment measures is of great importance in reducing the spread of COVID-19.

## 2. Measurement of dark traits

Throughout the past 20 years, empirical efforts have been made to develop valid and reliable measures of the Dark Triad traits, including, for example, the Dark Triad Dirty Dozen (Jonason & Webster, 2010) and the Short Dark Triad (Jones & Paulhus, 2014). Ensuring the validity of these measures has important clinical and research implications, as we often use them to predict important interpersonal, workplace, education, and clinical outcomes. However, as discussed by Katz et al. (2022), a lack of consideration for the possible invariance between men and women at the item development stage hinders the utility of the measures, as results across studies may not generalize. The authors further contended that a more nuanced approach to measuring levels of dark personality traits should be applied to extend beyond psychopathy, narcissism, Machiavellianism, and sadism. Katz et al. (2022) subsequently developed The Dark Side of Humanity Scale, which assesses levels of successful psychopathy, grandiose entitlement, everyday sadism, and narcissistic entitlement rage. In their investigation, community samples of individuals were recruited, and the items were tested using exploratory graph analysis, item response theory, confirmatory factor analysis, tests of invariance, and test-retest reliability. The authors conclude that The Dark Side of Humanity Scale demonstrates a robust four-factor structure, and that its invariance across men and women provides a foundation for meaningful comparisons.

## 3. Concluding remarks

Overall, the articles in this special issue provide breadth, depth, as well as a rich diversity of perspectives about dispositions related to human malevolence. More importantly, these articles further enhance the discourse related to various issues in the field, and will inspire new avenues of thought on theoretical, psychometric, or substantive empirical issues. The studies presented in this special issue support the

position that there is more to personality research than what is captured by trait taxonomies, such as the Five-Factor model. Continued work in this field will allow for researchers to expand the current understanding of dark personality traits in relation to behavioural outcomes (e.g., violent behaviours, attitudes within the workplace) with important practical implications.

## References

- Chabrol, H., Van Leeuwen, N., Rodgers, R., & Séjourné, N. (2009). Contributions of psychopathic, narcissistic, Machiavellian, and sadistic personality traits to juvenile delinquency. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 47, 734–739. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2009.06.020>
- Ferreiros, L., & Clemente, M. (2022). Dark personality and intimate partner relationships in young adults. *Acta Psychologica*, 225, Article 103549. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2022.103549>
- Grežo, M., & Adamus, M. (2022). Light and Dark Core of personality and the adherence to COVID-19 containment measures: The roles of motivation and trust in government. *Acta Psychologica*, 223, Article 103483. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2021.103483>
- Jonason, P. K., & Webster, G. D. (2010). The dirty dozen: A concise measure of the dark triad. *Psychological Assessment*, 22(2), 420–432. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0019265>
- Jones, D. N., & Paulhus, D. L. (2014). Introducing the short dark triad (SD3) a brief measure of dark personality traits. *Assessment*, 21(1), 28–41. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1073191113514105>
- Junça-Silva, A., & Silva, D. (2021). Curiosity did not kill the cat: It made it stronger and happy, but only if the was not “dark”. *Acta Psychologica*, 221, Article 103444. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2021.103444>
- Katz, L., Harvey, C., Baker, I. S., & Howard, C. (2022). The Dark Side of Humanity Scale: A reconstruction of the Dark Tetrad constructs. *Acta Psychologica*, 222, Article 103461. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2021.103461>
- Kaufman, S. B., Yaden, D. B., Hyde, E., & Tsukayama, E. (2019). The light vs. dark triad of personality: Contrasting two very different profiles of human nature. *Frontiers in Psychology*, Article 467. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00467>
- Kay, C. (2022). Animal house: The Dark Tetrad traits and membership in sororities and fraternities. *Acta Psychologica*, 222, Article 103473. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2021.103473>
- Kowalski, C. M., Rogoza, R., Saklofske, D. H., & Schermer, J. A. (2021). Dark triads, tetrads, tents, and cores: Why navigate (research) the jungle of dark personality models without a compass (criterion)? *Acta Psychologica*, 221, Article 103455. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2021.103455>
- Paulhus, D. L., & Williams, K. (2002). The Dark Triad of personality: Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 36, 556–568. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0092-6566\(02\)00505-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0092-6566(02)00505-6)
- Turi, A., Rebeles, M.-R., & Visu-Petra, L. (2022). The tangled webs they weave: A scoping review of deception detection and production in relation to Dark Triad traits. *Acta Psychologica*, 226, Article 103574. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2022.103574>

Christopher M. Kowalski<sup>a,1</sup>, Rachel A. Plouffe<sup>a,1</sup>, Radosław Rogoza<sup>b</sup>,  
Julie Aitken Schermer<sup>a,\*</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Psychology Department, The University of Western Ontario, London,  
Canada

<sup>b</sup> Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, Poland

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [jharris@uwo.ca](mailto:jharris@uwo.ca) (J.A. Schermer).

<sup>1</sup> C.M. Kowalski and R.A. Plouffe share first authorship.