

The Dark Triad Traits and Fame Interest: Do Dark Personalities Desire Stardom?

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Abstract Popular media has become increasingly flooded with material concerning fame and celebrities. Although the fascination with fame is not a new phenomenon, the emergence of YouTube.com and reality television has led to the perception that fame is something that seemingly anyone can achieve. Researchers have examined the characteristics that are associated with the desire for fame and have found that narcissism is one of the most consistent predictors of fame interest. The goal of the present study was to extend previous research by examining how the additional two Dark Triad personality traits (i.e., psychopathy and Machiavellianism; Paulhus and Williams 2002) and another conceptualization of narcissism (i.e., grandiose and vulnerable forms of pathological narcissism) relate to aspects of fame interest among 569 undergraduate students. Facets of psychopathy and narcissism were associated with multiple aspects of fame interest, whereas Machiavellianism was negatively associated with desiring fame for altruistic purposes only. Discussion focuses on possible explanations for the associations that the Dark Triad personality traits had with the six dimensions of fame interest.

Keywords Fame · Pathological narcissism · Psychopathy · Machiavellianism

There is a growing obsession in the media focusing on celebrity and entertainment culture. People are constantly inundated with images of fame and celebrity status by multiple media

outlets including television, magazines, websites, and blogs. Although interest in fame is far from a new development, actually *becoming* famous seems like a more realistic possibility than ever before. Multiple outlets have made it possible for regular individuals to become famous – at least for a brief period of time – by doing things such as landing a role on a reality television show (e.g., *Toddlers and Tiaras*, *The Real World*, *Big Brother*), participating in a televised competition program (e.g., *The Bachelor*, *American Idol*, *Survivor*), or posting a video on YouTube.com that goes viral. The perceived ease of achieving fame may be motivating large numbers of individuals – especially younger individuals – to strive for celebrity status. Consistent with this possibility, research has found that 40 % of children between the ages of 10 and 12 reported that becoming famous is their biggest goal in life, with kindness toward others and achievement taking second and third place, respectively (Uhls and Greenfield 2012).

The increase in the desire for fame has led several researchers to begin examining various aspects of this desire. These studies have found that individuals report a variety of reasons for desiring fame which include receiving attention, gaining wealth, increasing their social status, and becoming more attractive (e.g., Gountas et al. 2012). Maltby (2010) identified six dimensions of fame interest that capture the reasons individuals want to be famous: *celebrity lifestyle* (i.e., desire for the wealth, access to high-profile social groups, publicity, and travel that accompany celebrity status), *perceived suitability* (i.e., belief that one is suitable for celebrity status, or possessing personal characteristics that are appropriate and suitable for fame), *altruistic* (i.e., desiring fame for altruistic purposes such as improving the social and economic status of close others or the ability to draw attention to perceived social injustices), *intensity* (i.e., a desperate desire for fame reflecting willingness to ignore and/or disregard other aspects of life in the pursuit of fame), *drive* (i.e., being driven

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to achieve fame status by putting forth great effort, willingness to work hard to achieve fame, or ambition), and *vulnerability* (i.e., desiring fame because of a belief that fame will help the individual overcome perceived short-comings such as low feelings of self-worth and a lack of overall happiness). Research concerning fame interest has shown that particular aspects of the desire for fame are associated with basic personality dimensions (e.g., extraversion), self-esteem, and narcissism (e.g., Maltby 2010; Noser and Zeigler-Hill 2014). For example, narcissistic personality features have been found to be positively related to the fame interest dimensions of celebrity lifestyle, perceived suitability, intensity, and drive (Maltby 2010).

The reasons reported for interest in fame may be particularly relevant for individuals who possess the personality features that constitute the Dark Triad of personality (i.e., narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism; Paulhus and Williams 2002). The personality traits that compose the Dark Triad are considered to be unique constructs but share certain characteristics such as callousness and a focus on agentic goals (e.g., Jones and Paulhus 2011). It seems likely that individuals who possess higher levels of these dark personality features may be quite interested in becoming famous because this status can be viewed as an agentic goal in itself as well as a means for acquiring power, influence, wealth, and mating opportunities. Consistent with this possibility, previous studies have found connections between narcissism and fame interest (Greenwood et al. 2013; Maltby 2010). However, it has been suggested that the personality features that make up the Dark Triad should be examined simultaneously in order to reveal their unique associations with outcome variables (Furnham et al. 2013). As a result, it is important to consider the unique associations that each of the Dark Triad traits has with the desire for fame in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of their relationships with fame interest.

The Dark Triad and Fame Interest

Narcissism Narcissism is characterized by grandiosity, selfishness, egocentrism, vanity, need for admiration, authority, and entitlement (e.g., Emmons 1987; Raskin and Hall 1979, 1981; Raskin and Terry 1988). With this description in mind, it is not surprising that narcissism has been linked to interest in fame in samples drawn from the general population (Greenwood et al. 2013; Maltby 2010). Further, famous individuals have been found to actually report higher scores on the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin and Hall 1979, 1981) than individuals who were not famous (Young and Pinsky 2006).

Previous research examining the associations between narcissism and fame interest have measured narcissism using the

NPI, which is thought to capture “normal” levels of narcissism in the general population and is consistent with how the majority of social-personality psychologists conceptualize narcissism (see Miller and Campbell 2008, for a comparison of clinical and social-personality conceptualizations of narcissism). However, there is another conceptualization of narcissism that focuses on its pathological form (e.g., Miller et al. 2011; Pincus et al. 2009). This conceptualization considers pathological narcissism to exist in two basic forms: grandiose and vulnerable. Grandiose narcissism is characterized by dominance, grandiosity, arrogance, exploitation of others, and feelings of entitlement. In contrast, vulnerable narcissism is characterized by introversion, negative emotionality, coldness, need for self-affirmation from others, and internal grandiose fantasies. To date, no research has examined how these two forms of pathological narcissism may relate to aspects of fame interest. It is important to examine these unique associations because, although normal and pathological conceptualizations of narcissism have been found to have similar associations with some variables (e.g., entitlement, grandiose fantasies, and desire for admiration; Dickinson and Pincus 2003; Gabbard 1989; Miller and Campbell 2008; Pincus et al. 2009), they have been found to differ in their associations with other variables (e.g., interpersonal style; Southard et al. 2015).

Grandiose and vulnerable narcissism are associated with feelings of entitlement (e.g., Miller et al. 2011), which led us to hypothesize that both forms of pathological narcissism would be positively associated with the celebrity lifestyle and intensity dimensions of fame interest. We also hypothesized that grandiose narcissism would be positively related to the perceived suitability and drive dimensions of fame interest because grandiose narcissism is characterized by arrogance and feelings of superiority (e.g., Miller et al. 2011) as well as the fearless pursuit of personal goals (e.g., Foster and Trimm 2008). In contrast, we believed that vulnerable narcissism would be positively associated with the vulnerability dimension of fame interest because negative emotionality and basing one’s feelings of self-worth on the approval of others are key features of vulnerable narcissism (e.g., Pincus et al. 2009).

Psychopathy The construct of psychopathy was originally conceptualized and investigated in forensic populations – such as prisoners and mentally disordered offenders – but the study of psychopathy has expanded to include normal populations (e.g., Williams et al. 2007). Psychopathy is described as tendencies towards callousness and interpersonal manipulation as well as behaviors that are erratic, antisocial, and impulsive in nature (e.g., Hare 1985; Paulhus et al. 2012; Williams et al. 2007). Similar to narcissism, psychopathy is thought to be a multifaceted construct. Although there have been several underlying factor structures suggested for psychopathy (e.g., Hare 1991; Levenson et al. 1995; Mahmut et al. 2011;

Williams et al. 2007), one suggestion is that psychopathy exists in two forms: *primary* psychopathy and *secondary* psychopathy (Hare 1991; Levenson et al. 1995). Primary psychopathy is considered to reflect characteristics such as selfishness, callousness, lack of affect for others, superficial charm, chronic lying, and lack of remorse (Jakobwitz and Egan 2006; Levenson et al. 1995). Secondary psychopathy is considered to reflect an antisocial lifestyle and is characterized by susceptibility to boredom, impulsivity, early behavior problems, and tendencies toward delinquency (Jakobwitz and Egan 2006; Levenson et al. 1995).

Personality researchers have started to examine the possibility that individuals high in psychopathic traits may actually be able to attain positions of power in society (e.g., Babiak and Hare 2006; Babiak et al. 2010). For example, Babiak et al. (2010) examined levels of psychopathy in a sample of corporate managers and executives and found that, even though the corporate sample had a slightly lower mean score compared to a previous community sample, there were more individuals in the corporate sample whose scores were considered high (i.e., 3 % of the corporate sample had scores comparable to what is considered the “cut-off” score for psychopathy, as opposed to only 0.2 % in a previous community sample). Further, some individuals with higher levels of psychopathic tendencies held positions of elevated corporate status including vice-president, supervisor, and director (Babiak et al. 2010). Interestingly, this research also found that overall psychopathy scores were positively associated with being perceived as possessing good communication skills (e.g., public speaking, giving presentations), strategic planning (e.g., setting long-term goals), and creativity (e.g., ability to generate novel ideas), while also being associated with poor management style (e.g., insensitivity to team members, inability to resolve personnel issues), failure to act as a team player (e.g., being uncooperative with team members, failing to share information/credit for success with team members), and poor performance evaluations. These associations suggest that, even though individuals higher in psychopathy may not be the most productive or cooperative individuals to work with, psychopathy does not preclude individuals from attaining higher-level positions in organizations. Given that some individuals with high levels of psychopathy have been able to navigate the corporate world seemingly well – achieving positions of status and power – it is important to examine how psychopathy may be associated with interest in fame because fame is also connected to elevated status.

It seems likely that psychopathy may be related to the desire for fame because many of the characteristics that likely contribute to the success of individuals higher in psychopathy in the corporate world (e.g., charm and charisma; Babiak et al. 2010) may also be advantageous in the pursuit of fame. We hypothesized that individuals with high levels of primary psychopathy would likely be attracted to the celebrity lifestyle,

perceive themselves as suitable for fame, have an intense desire for fame, and be quite driven to become famous. However, we also believed that individuals with high levels of primary psychopathy would be reluctant to report desiring fame for reasons indicating lower feelings of self-worth (i.e., vulnerability) and would not be interested in achieving fame status as a means to improve the life conditions of others (i.e., altruistic). For secondary psychopathy, we expected positive associations with all dimensions of fame interest except for the altruistic and perceived suitability dimensions. That is, we believed that individuals with high levels of secondary psychopathy – similar to individuals with high levels of primary psychopathy – would be attracted to the celebrity lifestyle, desire fame intensely, and be driven to achieve fame but this desire for fame would not be due to altruistic purposes. In contrast to primary psychopathy, we believed that individuals with high levels of secondary psychopathy would be unlikely to view themselves as possessing the characteristics suitable for fame, and would also report desiring fame for vulnerable purposes such as increasing feelings of self-worth. That is, we predicted that secondary psychopathy would be negatively related or unrelated to the perceived suitability dimension of fame interest and positively related to the vulnerability dimension. These predictions are based on the idea that secondary psychopathy may develop early in life as the result of scarce resources and mating opportunities, low socioeconomic status, inconsistent discipline, and family violence (e.g., Mealey 1995). We reasoned that these life circumstances could possibly lead an individual to perceive themselves as possessing characteristics that differ from common media depictions of famous individuals who are portrayed as wealthy and having access to abundant resources. However, we reasoned that this perceived difference would not hinder individuals higher in secondary psychopathy from desiring the celebrity lifestyle, desiring fame intensely, and being driven to achieve fame.

Machiavellianism Machiavellianism is characterized by strategic interpersonal manipulation, cynical world views, pursuit of self-beneficial and agentic goals, as well as strategic long-term planning to achieve those goals (Christie and Geis 1970; Rauthmann and Will 2011). Individuals with high levels of Machiavellianism tend to be overly self-centered and focused on achieving self-serving goals such as the attainment of power, money, and status rather than communal goals aimed at helping others (e.g., Rauthmann and Will 2011). Characteristics that are associated with Machiavellianism – such as the pursuit of power, money, and status – would make it seem as though individuals with high levels of Machiavellianism should be attracted to fame, but other characteristics of Machiavellianism – such as careful avoidance of detection and concealment of the self (e.g., Rauthmann and Will 2011) – led us to question whether individuals with

Machiavellian personality features would want the attention that accompanies fame. Individuals with Machiavellian tendencies are willing to exploit, manipulate, and deceive others, but only when doing so is unlikely to be detected or recognized because they prefer to conceal their true personalities, agendas, and weaknesses from others (Christie and Geis 1970; Jones and Paulhus 2011; Rauthmann and Will 2011). Being famous clearly places individuals in positions of high visibility. Indeed, the media frequently exposes the personal matters of celebrities, such as their lifestyles, romantic partners, legal troubles, and personal failures. The general population also appears to be quite preoccupied with the personal matters of celebrities as evidenced by the fact that television programs devoted to the topic such as *Entertainment Tonight*, *The Insider*, *Inside Edition*, *Access Hollywood*, and *Extra* are viewed by over 100 million Americans each week (Tapper and Morris 2005). This intrusion into one's personal life may be unattractive to Machiavellian individuals who prefer to conceal their agendas and preference for operating behind the scenes rather than in the spotlight. As a result, we were uncertain as to whether Machiavellianism would be associated with aspects of fame interest other than our prediction that Machiavellianism would have either a negative association or no association with the desire for fame for altruistic purposes which was based on the agentic interpersonal style that has been found to be associated with Machiavellianism (e.g., Southard et al. 2015).

Method

Participants and Procedure

Participants in the current study were 569 undergraduates (128 men, 441 women) at a university in the Midwestern region of the United States who were enrolled in psychology courses and participated in exchange for partial fulfillment of a research participation requirement. Participants completed measures of the Dark Triad and fame interest – along with other measures that are not relevant to the present study (e.g., self-esteem) – via a secure website. The average age of participants was 20.48 years ($SD=4.40$) and the racial/ethnic composition was 77 % White, 10 % Black, 3 % Hispanic, and 10 % other.

Measures

Pathological Narcissism The Pathological Narcissism Inventory (PNI; Pincus et al. 2009) was developed to measure pathological forms of narcissism. The PNI consists of 52 items and includes subscales for both grandiosity (18 items; e.g., “I often fantasize about being admired and respected” [$\alpha=0.86$]) and vulnerability (34 items; e.g., “I sometimes need important others in my life to reassure me of my self-

worth” [$\alpha=0.94$]). Responses to each item were provided on scales ranging from 1 (*not at all like me*) to 6 (*very much like me*). Scores for all measures in this study – including separate facets – were calculated by averaging their constituent items.

Psychopathy Psychopathy was measured using the Levenson Self-Report Psychopathy Scale (LSRP; Levenson et al. 1995). The LSRP was specifically designed to measure psychopathy in the general population and is based on the two-factor interpretation of Hare's revised Psychopathy Checklist (PCL-R; Hare 1991). The LSRP consists of 26 items and includes subscales for both primary psychopathy (16 items; e.g., “In today's world, I feel justified in doing anything I can get away with to succeed” [$\alpha=0.76$]) and secondary psychopathy (10 items; “I find myself in the same kinds of trouble, time after time” [$\alpha=0.73$]). Responses were provided on scales ranging from 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 4 (*agree strongly*).

Machiavellianism Machiavellianism was assessed via the MACH-IV (Christie and Geis 1970). The MACH-IV consists of 20 items (e.g., “Never tell anyone the real reason you did something unless it is useful to do so” [$\alpha=0.68$]) and was developed to measure manipulative and deceitful tendencies as well as cynical beliefs. For each item on the MACH-IV, participants rated their level of agreement with each item using scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Fame Interest Interest in fame was measured via the Fame Interest Scale (FIS; Maltby 2010). The FIS consists of 42 items and respondents rate their level of agreement with each item using scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The FIS includes six domains of fame interest with each being measured with seven items: celebrity lifestyle (e.g., “I want to see my picture in magazines” [$\alpha=0.93$]), perceived suitability (e.g., “I should be famous because of my unique character” [$\alpha=0.93$]), altruistic (e.g., “I want to be famous to I can give my family a better quality of life” [$\alpha=0.96$]), intensity (e.g., “Very little matters to me apart from being famous” [$\alpha=0.92$]), drive (e.g., “I work hard every day to be famous” [$\alpha=0.97$]), vulnerability (e.g., “I want to be famous because it would help me overcome issues I have about myself” [$\alpha=0.95$]).

Results

The means, standard deviations, and tests for sex differences for each of the measures in the current study are displayed in Table 1. Intercorrelations for each of the measures in the current study are displayed in Table 2. In order to examine unique

Table 1 Descriptive statistics and sex differences tests for dark triad traits and dimensions of fame interest

	<i>M</i> (SD)			<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>
	Overall	Men	Women		
1. PNI Grandiosity	3.72 (0.73)	3.78 (0.73)	3.70 (0.73)	1.21	0.10
2. PNI Vulnerability	3.10 (0.81)	3.02 (0.76)	3.11 (0.83)	−1.12	−0.09
3. Primary Psychopathy	2.05 (0.41)	2.17 (0.45)	2.02 (0.39)	3.03**	0.46
4. Secondary Psychopathy	2.04 (0.46)	2.07 (0.47)	2.04 (0.46)	0.09	0.01
5. Machiavellianism	2.64 (0.39)	2.77 (0.36)	2.60 (0.39)	3.97**	0.34
6. FIS Celebrity Lifestyle	1.95 (0.98)	2.12 (1.02)	1.90 (0.96)	1.97*	0.17
7. FIS Perceived Suitability	2.02 (1.00)	2.30 (1.06)	1.94 (0.97)	3.00**	0.26
8. FIS Altruistic	2.65 (1.25)	2.82 (1.20)	2.60 (1.26)	1.42	0.12
9. FIS Intensity	1.63 (0.80)	1.84 (0.87)	1.57 (0.77)	3.00**	0.26
10. FIS Drive	1.52 (0.86)	1.77 (0.98)	1.45 (0.81)	3.03**	0.46
11. FIS Vulnerability	1.70 (0.88)	1.93 (0.94)	1.63 (0.85)	2.99**	0.26

d is Cohen's *d* for effect size

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

associations between predictors (i.e., dark personality features) and outcome variables (i.e., dimensions of fame interest) data were analyzed via path analysis in AMOS (version 20: Arbuckle 2011). The model was just-identified (i.e., parameters were estimated for all data points, resulting in a theoretically perfect model fit), therefore all fit indices were held constant and are not reported (Kline 2011). In order to account for shared variability between the dimensions of fame interest, we allowed the error terms associated with each dimension of fame to be correlated in the model.¹ The model is displayed in Fig. 1 and the standardized path coefficients are presented in Table 3.²

We hypothesized that grandiose narcissism would be positively associated with the celebrity lifestyle, perceived suitability, and intensity dimensions of fame interest and that vulnerable narcissism would be positively associated with the celebrity lifestyle, intensity, and vulnerability dimensions of fame interest. The results revealed that our hypotheses for grandiose narcissism were partially supported as grandiose

narcissism was positively associated with each of the hypothesized dimensions of fame interest except for drive. Although it was not predicted, a positive association emerged between grandiose narcissism and the altruistic dimension of fame interest. Partial support also emerged for our hypotheses concerning vulnerable narcissism such that vulnerable narcissism was positively associated with the vulnerability dimension of fame interest but its hypothesized positive associations with celebrity lifestyle and intensity failed to emerge. Although it was not expected, vulnerable narcissism had a significant negative association with the perceived suitability dimension of fame interest.

Regarding psychopathy, we hypothesized that primary psychopathy would be positively associated with the celebrity lifestyle, perceived suitability, intensity, and drive dimensions of fame interest and that secondary psychopathy would be associated with the celebrity lifestyle, intensity, drive, and vulnerability dimensions of fame interest. Our results supported the hypotheses for both primary and secondary psychopathy such that positive associations emerged between these personality features and each of the hypothesized dimensions of fame interest. Additionally, an unexpected positive association emerged between primary psychopathy and the vulnerability dimension of fame interest.

We predicted that Machiavellianism would be negatively associated with the altruistic dimension of fame interest but we were less certain about possible associations that could emerge between Machiavellianism and the other dimensions of fame interest because Machiavellianism is characterized by both the pursuit of self-centered goals as well as avoidance of detection and secrecy regarding personal matters. The expected negative association emerged between Machiavellianism and the altruistic dimension but no other significant associations emerged for Machiavellianism.

¹ To determine the best way to account for the shared variance between dimensions of fame interest, we ran two versions of our model, one in which we extracted a common fame seeking factor, and one in which we allowed the error terms associated with each fame dimension to correlate. There were very few differences in the results between these two models and we decided to use the version with correlated error terms to simplify the analyses. The analysis extracting the common fame factor is available in online Appendix A. We also conducted additional analyses that included only the PNI composite score, the SRPS composite score, and Machiavellianism as predictors. In the interest of parsimony, we did not include the results of these analyses in the manuscript but the results of these analyses are available from the first author upon request.

² We also conducted analyses that included participant sex as a possible moderator of the relationships between dark personality features and the dimensions of fame interest. Sex was found to moderate the relationship between secondary psychopathy and the perceived suitability, intensity, drive, and vulnerability dimensions of fame interest. Details of these analyses are available in online Appendix B.

Table 2 Intercorrelations for dark personality features and fame interest dimensions

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. PNI Grandiosity	–										
2. PNI Vulnerability	0.56**	–									
3. Primary Psychopathy	0.21**	0.39**	–								
4. Secondary Psychopathy	0.13**	0.46**	0.50**	–							
5. Machiavellianism	0.05	0.34**	0.46**	0.46**	–						
6. FIS Celebrity Lifestyle	0.29**	0.30**	0.44**	0.34**	0.23**	–					
7. FIS Perceived Suitability	0.30**	0.18**	0.33**	0.19**	0.08	0.76**	–				
8. FIS Altruistic	0.27**	0.14**	0.09*	0.08	–0.05	0.58**	0.63**	–			
9. FIS Intensity	0.24**	0.33**	0.55**	0.40**	0.28**	0.77**	0.69**	0.38**	–		
10. FIS Drive	0.17**	0.28**	0.48**	0.34**	0.27**	0.72**	0.67**	0.35**	0.87**	–	
11. FIS Vulnerability	0.24**	0.40**	0.47**	0.40**	0.27**	0.75**	0.64**	0.44**	0.85**	0.80**	–

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Discussion

Given recent increases in the understanding of fame interest, as well as the growing perception that achieving fame may be a realistic possibility for regular individuals, the goal of the current study was to extend previous research by further examining the relationships between the Dark Triad personality features and dimensions of fame interest. Although narcissism – as typically conceptualized by social-personality psychologists – has been found to be

positively associated with dimensions of fame interest (Greenwood et al. 2013; Maltby 2010), this is the first study to our knowledge to examine the relationships that pathological forms of narcissism – as well as psychopathy and Machiavellianism – have with fame interest.

Narcissism

Consistent with our hypotheses, the results of the current study revealed that grandiose narcissism was positively

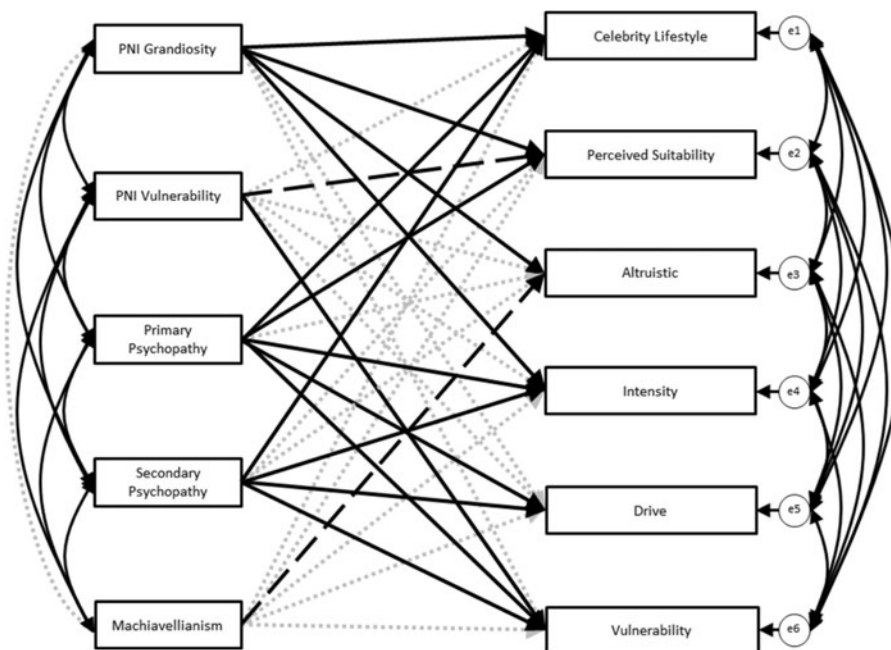


Fig. 1 Path model of the associations that the Dark Triad personality features had with dimensions of fame interest. *Note:* Rectangles indicate measured variables and circles indicate disturbance terms. The positive significant associations are indicated by solid black arrows, negative significant associations are indicated by dashed black arrows, and nonsignificant associations are indicated by dashed grey arrows. The

significant correlations among the predictor variables (i.e., the Dark Triad personality features) and outcome variables (i.e., dimensions of fame interest) are indicated by solid curved bidirectional arrows and nonsignificant correlations are represented by dashed curved bidirectional arrows

Table 3 Standardized path coefficients predicting dimensions of fame interest using dark triad personality features

	Celebrity Lifestyle	Perceived Suitability	Altruistic	Intensity	Drive	Vulnerability
PNI Grandiosity	0.21**	0.29**	0.27**	0.11**	0.06	0.06
PNI Vulnerability	−0.01	−0.12*	−0.04	0.02	0.04	0.18**
Primary Psychopathy	0.31**	0.31**	0.06	0.44**	0.39**	0.31**
Secondary Psychopathy	0.16**	0.09	0.08	0.16**	0.11*	0.15**
Machiavellianism	0.01	−0.01	−0.12*	−0.01	0.03	−0.01

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

associated with the celebrity lifestyle, perceived suitability, and intensity dimensions of fame interest. Not surprisingly, this suggests that individuals with high levels of grandiose narcissism desire the benefits of celebrity status such as recognition and access to wealth and elite social groups. These individuals also report perceiving themselves as possessing characteristics that are suitable for celebrity status and having an intense desire for fame. However, grandiose narcissism was not associated with the drive dimension of fame interest which suggests that even though individuals with high levels of grandiose narcissism desire the lifestyle of celebrities, believe they are suitable for fame, and desire fame intensely, they do not report actually working to become famous. This finding diverges from the results of Maltby (2010) which found that narcissism – as measured by the NPI – was positively associated with the drive dimension of fame interest. This divergence in findings may provide further support for the distinction between the typical conceptualization of narcissism in social-personality psychology – as captured by the NPI – and the pathological forms of narcissism examined in the current study (e.g., Miller and Campbell 2008). Although the NPI and the grandiosity subscale of the PNI both capture the more socially toxic aspects of narcissism such as interpersonal manipulation and the exploitation of others (Maxwell et al. 2011; Pincus et al. 2009), there are some key differences between the aspects of narcissism assessed by these instruments. For example, scores on the NPI have been found positively related to explicit self-esteem, whereas scores on the grandiose narcissism subscale of the PNI have been found to be negatively related to explicit self-esteem (e.g., Maxwell et al. 2011). Further, it seems that the positive association between the NPI and self-esteem is mostly due to the more adaptive characteristics assessed by the NPI such as self-perceived leadership qualities (e.g., Maxwell et al. 2011) which are not assessed by the PNI. It seems possible that the positive association between the NPI and the drive dimension of fame interest found by Maltby (2010) could also be mostly due to these more adaptive aspects assessed by the NPI. In turn, the lack of association in the current study between grandiose narcissism and the drive dimension of fame interest may be partially explained by the

absence of these more adaptive characteristics in the assessment of narcissism by the PNI.

It is possible that individuals with high levels of grandiose narcissism do not report working for fame because they believe fame will simply befall them. This reasoning is consistent with previous literature showing that individuals with higher levels of grandiose narcissism are characterized by grandiose self-fantasies (e.g., Pincus et al. 2009). A related possibility is that individuals with high levels of grandiose narcissism choose to pursue self-enhancement opportunities other than fame in their daily lives. This contention is consistent with research finding that individuals with high levels of narcissism were more likely to persist at accomplishing a difficult task when no other self-enhancement opportunities were available, but were more likely to quit a difficult task sooner than other individuals if alternative opportunities for self-enhancement were available (Wallace et al. 2009). Taking these findings into account, the lack of association between grandiose narcissism and the drive dimension of fame interest may be partially due to individuals with higher levels of this personality feature choosing to pursue other avenues of self-enhancement.

Grandiose narcissism was also positively associated with the altruistic dimension of fame interest. Although we did not hypothesize this relationship, this finding is consistent with aspects of grandiose narcissism such as self-sacrificing self-enhancement which is characterized by engaging in seemingly altruistic acts with the goal of gaining the admiration of others in order to support one's inflated sense of self (Pincus et al. 2009). This suggests that individuals higher in grandiose narcissism may report desiring fame for altruistic purposes, but this is likely due to the admiration they expect as a result of aiding others, rather than actual benevolence.

Vulnerable narcissism was positively associated with the vulnerability dimension of fame interest, but the predicted positive relationship between vulnerable narcissism and the celebrity lifestyle dimension did not emerge. In addition, an unexpected negative association between vulnerable narcissism and the perceived

suitability dimension of fame interest did emerge. This pattern of results may indicate that individuals with higher levels of vulnerable narcissism desire fame because they believe it is a possible means to overcome their poor feelings of self-worth even though they do not view themselves as possessing the sorts of personal characteristics that are suitable for fame. These findings are consistent with characteristics of vulnerable narcissism such as possessing feelings of self-worth that are contingent upon receiving recognition and admiration from others, self-focused anger when others fail to provide admiration, and feelings of shame about needing the recognition of others who fail to provide it (Pincus et al. 2009). It is possible that the negative relationship that emerged in the present study between vulnerable narcissism and the perceived suitability dimension of fame interest may reflect the low feelings of self-esteem, self-focused anger, and shame that tends to characterize individuals with high levels of vulnerable narcissism when others fail to provide the admiration and recognition they desire. Additionally, the lack of an association between vulnerable narcissism and the celebrity lifestyle dimension of fame interest further suggests that it may not be the access to money, elite social circles, or publicity that appeal to individuals with high levels of vulnerable narcissism, but the possibility of overcoming low feelings of self-worth.

Psychopathy

As hypothesized, primary psychopathy was positively associated with the celebrity lifestyle, perceived suitability, intensity, and drive dimensions of fame interest and an additional, unexpected positive association emerged between primary psychopathy and the vulnerability dimension. The only dimension of fame interest that was not associated with primary psychopathy was altruism. This suggests that individuals with high levels of primary psychopathy only desire fame for reasons that are beneficial for themselves. It appears that individuals with higher levels of primary psychopathy desire the publicity, wealth, and power that are associated with the celebrity lifestyle, believe they possess the personal characteristics that are suitable for fame, have an intense desire for fame, report exerting effort to achieve fame, and believe that fame could help them overcome low feelings of self-worth. However, these individuals do not desire fame for the purpose of improving the lives of others but only for improving their own lives. These findings are consistent with the view that primary psychopathy is characterized by selfishness, callousness, lack of affect for others, superficial charm, chronic

lying, and lack of remorse (Jakobwitz and Egan 2006; Levenson et al. 1995).

The positive association between primary psychopathy and the vulnerability dimension of fame interest is surprising given that previous research has found that individuals with high levels of primary psychopathy tend to be confident, bold, superficially charming, and dominant (e.g., Blackburn 1975; Hicks et al. 2004; Skeem et al. 2007; Skeem et al. 2003). There are at least two explanations for this finding. First, individuals with high levels of primary psychopathy have been characterized as lacking emotion or possessing emotional deficits (e.g., Cooke and Michie 2001; Harpur et al. 1989; Karpman 1941; Mealey 1995; Patrick et al. 1997; Skeem et al. 2003) and the vulnerability dimension of fame interest is characterized, in part, by the desire of fame for the purpose of increasing positive emotions (Maltby 2010). For example, items making up the vulnerability dimension of fame interest include “Becoming famous would help me feel as good as other people” and “I want to be famous because it would make me happy with myself.” It is possible that the emotional deficits that are associated with primary psychopathy may have led individuals with high levels of this personality feature to report desiring fame because they believe it could make them happy even though they have difficulty experiencing positive emotions. A second possible explanation for the positive relationship between primary psychopathy and the vulnerability dimension of fame interest is that individuals higher in primary psychopathy endorsed desiring fame for any self-serving purpose including assuaging feelings of vulnerability. That is, individuals higher in primary psychopathy may desire fame for any purpose they believe will benefit them, even if the purpose implies possessing low feelings of self-worth.

Secondary psychopathy was positively associated with the celebrity lifestyle, intensity, drive, and vulnerability dimensions of fame interest and was unrelated to the perceived suitability dimension. These results were consistent with our hypotheses as well as descriptions of secondary psychopathy as reflecting impulsivity and a parasitic lifestyle (e.g., Cooke and Michie 2001; Lilienfeld 1998). These findings suggest that individuals higher in secondary psychopathy report desiring the wealth and flashy lifestyle associated with fame, desire fame intensely, are driven to achieve fame, and view fame as a means to improve low feelings of self-worth, but do not report viewing themselves as possessing personal characteristics suitable for fame. It has been suggested that secondary psychopathy may develop, at least in part, as the result of exposure to a harsh environment and lack of access to resources (Mealey 1995). We reasoned that this type of upbringing could lead individuals with high levels of secondary

psychopathy to view fame as a means for improving their life conditions, increasing feelings of self-worth, and gaining access to scarce resources but may also lead individuals to perceive themselves as possessing personal characteristics that differ markedly from the flashy depictions of famous individuals in the media. It is important to note that these speculations are based on evolutionary views of psychopathy (e.g., Mealey 1995) which have been controversial (cf. Harris et al. 1994). It is also important to note that secondary psychopathy was the only dark personality feature found to have significant interactions with participant sex in the prediction of dimensions of fame interest in preliminary analyses. These analyses revealed somewhat different patterns of association between secondary psychopathy and dimensions of fame interest for men and women. Readers are encouraged to see online [Appendix B](#) for details and discussion of these analyses.

Machiavellianism

We were uncertain about the associations that Machiavellianism would have with the dimensions of fame interest because this personality feature is characterized by a focus on self-serving goals (e.g., attainment of power, money, and status) and strategic interpersonal manipulation, as well as careful avoidance of self-disclosure (e.g., Christie and Geis 1970; Rauthmann and Will 2011). We speculated that individuals higher in Machiavellianism may desire fame as a means to achieve their agentic goals or, conversely, may prefer to avoid fame due to the high visibility that accompanies celebrity status. Our results lend support to the latter of these possibilities because Machiavellianism was found to have a negative association with the altruistic dimension of fame interest but no other significant associations with the fame dimensions. These findings suggest that individuals with high levels of Machiavellianism are not particularly interested in fame, do not view themselves as possessing personal characteristics suitable for fame, and may be unlikely to pursue fame, especially for purposes that benefit others. This is consistent with views of individuals with high levels of Machiavellianism as being selfish and lacking concern for others (e.g., Christie and Geis 1970; Rauthmann and Will 2011). It seems as though individuals high in Machiavellianism may regard the visibility that accompanies fame as too much of a risk and that being famous is not worth the possible benefits.

Limitations and Future Directions

It is important to acknowledge some of the potential limitations of the current study. First, we relied

exclusively on self-report measures of Dark Triad personality features and fame interest. As a result, the current results are subject to self-presentation bias and the associations between the Dark Triad and dimensions of fame interest may be somewhat inflated due to shared method variance. It would be beneficial for future researchers to observe the actual daily behaviors of individuals such as attempts to become famous or develop a specific talent. It would also be beneficial for future researchers to obtain reports of target behaviors and strivings for fame from individuals' close others (e.g., friends, romantic partners, family members). Second, the sample used in the current study consisted predominantly of women. As a result, it is possible that our results are a better reflection of the relationships between dark personality features and fame interest in women than in men. A third limitation of the present study is that the causal nature of the associations between dark personality features and fame interest cannot be determined because of the correlational nature of our data. Although our underlying process model was that dark personality features would influence individuals' interest in becoming famous, this direction of causality cannot be clearly established with the present data. Finally, the results of the present study were obtained exclusively from undergraduate students in the United States which may limit the extent to which these results can be generalized to other populations. To address this limitation, future research should attempt to extend the present findings beyond undergraduate samples and include individuals from other cultures.

Conclusion

The present study investigated the relationships that the Dark Triad personality features had with fame interest in order to extend previous research regarding narcissism and fame interest (Greenwood et al. 2013; Maltby 2010; Young and Pinsky 2006). We examined the associations that the grandiose and vulnerable forms of pathological narcissism, the primary and secondary dimensions of psychopathy, and Machiavellianism had with six dimensions of fame interest. Our results revealed that narcissism and psychopathy were associated with multiple dimensions of fame interest, whereas Machiavellianism only had a negative association with the altruistic dimension of fame interest. We believe that our findings provide further support for the distinction between the personality features of the Dark Triad (e.g., Furnham et al. 2013) as each had unique patterns of association with the dimensions of fame interest.

Appendix A

Path Model Accounting for Shared Variance Between Dimensions of Fame Interest by Extracting a Common “Fame-Seeking” Factor

The model is displayed in Fig. 2 and the standardized path coefficients are presented in Table 4.

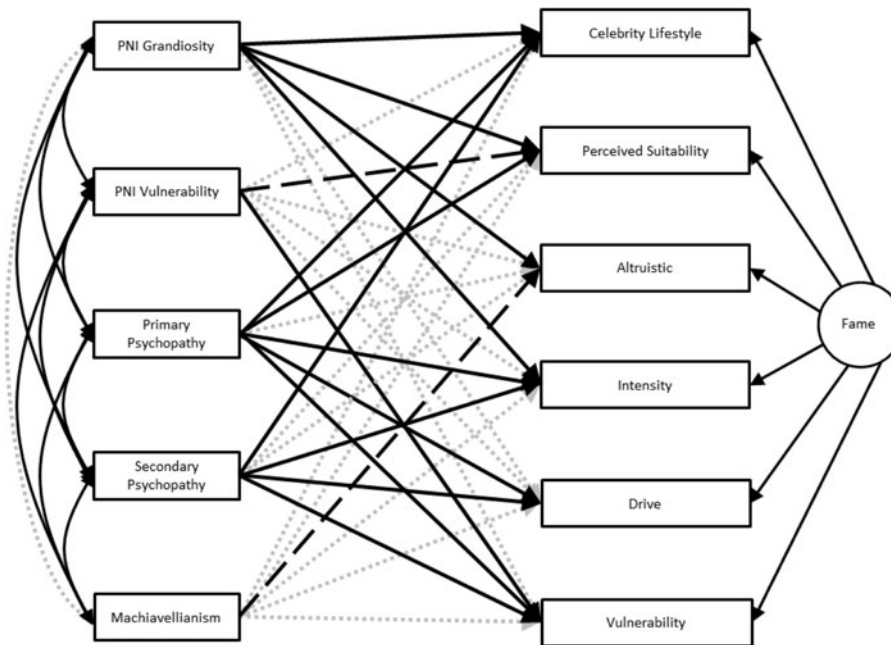


Fig. 2 Path model of the associations that the Dark Triad personality features had with dimensions of fame interest. *Note:* Rectangles indicate measured variables and circles indicate disturbance terms. The positive significant associations are indicated by solid black arrows, negative significant associations are indicated by dashed black arrows, and nonsignificant associations are indicated by dashed grey arrows. The

significant correlations among the predictor variables (i.e., the Dark Triad personality features) and outcome variables (i.e., dimensions of fame interest) are indicated by solid curved bidirectional arrows and nonsignificant correlations are represented by dashed curved bidirectional arrows

Table 4 Standardized path coefficients predicting dimensions of fame interest using Dark Triad personality features

	Celebrity Lifestyle	Perceived Suitability	Altruistic	Intensity	Drive	Vulnerability
PNI Grandiosity	0.18**	0.26**	0.26**	0.07	-0.02	0.05
PNI Vulnerability	-0.04	-0.16**	-0.05	-0.03	-0.01	0.15**
Primary Psychopathy	0.32**	0.30**	0.04	0.47**	0.43**	0.32**
Secondary Psychopathy	0.17**	0.10	0.08	0.17**	0.13**	0.15**
Machiavellianism	0.02	-0.08	-0.12**	0.00	0.04	0.02

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Appendix B

Separate Path Analyses for Men and Women Predicting Dimensions of Fame Interest Using the Dark Triad

In order to account for shared variability between the dimensions of fame interest, we allowed the error terms associated with each dimension of fame interest to be correlated in each of these three models. Our first model included interaction terms between each dark personality feature and sex of participant in order to investigate possible differences between men and women. Standardized path coefficients for these interactions are presented in Table 5. Significant interactions emerged between sex and secondary psychopathy for the perceived suitability, intensity, drive, and vulnerability dimensions of fame interest. No other interactions between dark personality features and participant sex were significant. Next, in order to probe these interactions and examine any other differences between men and women in the relationships between dark personality features and dimensions of fame interest, we conducted separate path analyses for men and women. These models are displayed in Panels A and B of Fig. 3 and standardized path coefficients are presented in Table 6.

Secondary psychopathy was positively related to the celebrity lifestyle dimension of fame interest for both men and women, suggesting that individuals high in secondary psychopathy desire the celebrity lifestyle regardless of biological sex. The association between secondary psychopathy and the intensity dimension of fame interest was positive for both men and women, although this association was stronger for men suggesting that both men and women higher in secondary psychopathy intensely desire fame, but this desire is stronger for men. Finally, secondary psychopathy was positively associated with the perceived suitability, drive, and vulnerability dimensions of fame interest in men only. These results may suggest that, although both men and women higher in secondary psychopathy are similar in their desire for the flashy aspects of the celebrity lifestyle and also intensely desire fame, only men higher in this dark personality feature view themselves as possessing characteristics suitable for fame, report working to achieve fame status, and desire this status for reasons of enhancing feelings of self-worth. Perhaps women are attracted to the lifestyle of celebrities and find it desirable, but doubt that they would ever be able to achieve fame status because they do not view themselves as possessing suitable characteristics for fame. This doubt could potentially be a reason that women higher in secondary psychopathy did not

Table 5 Standardized path coefficients for interactions between dark personality features and participant sex predicting dimensions of fame interest

	Celebrity Lifestyle	Perceived Suitability	Altruistic	Intensity	Drive	Vulnerability
PNI Grandiosity	-0.07	0.02	-0.03	0.02	-0.00	-0.05
PNI Vulnerability	-0.01	-0.03	-0.01	-0.02	-0.01	-0.06
Primary Psychopathy	-0.05	-0.10	-0.08	-0.06	-0.02	-0.00
Secondary Psychopathy	0.10	0.12*	0.06	0.13*	0.12*	0.16**
Machiavellianism	0.01	0.08	0.06	-0.03	-0.03	-0.05

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

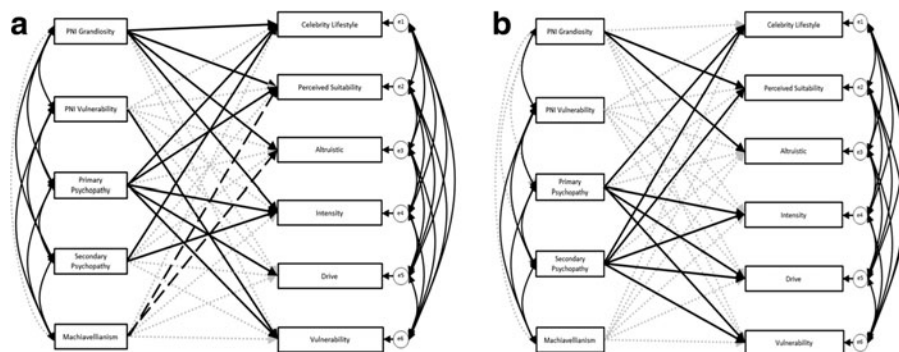


Fig. 3 Path models of the associations that the dark personality features had with dimensions of fame interest. Note: Panel A depicts associations for women and Panel B depicts associations for men. Rectangles indicate measured variables and circles indicate disturbance terms. The positive significant associations are indicated by solid black arrows, negative significant associations are indicated by dashed black arrows, and

nonsignificant associations are indicated by dashed grey arrows. The significant correlations among the predictor variables (i.e., dark personality features) and outcome variables (i.e., dimensions of fame interest) are indicated by solid curved bidirectional arrows and nonsignificant correlations are represented by dashed curved bidirectional arrows

Table 6 Standardized path coefficients predicting dimensions of fame interest using dark personality features

	Celebrity Lifestyle	Perceived Suitability	Altruistic	Intensity	Drive	Vulnerability
Women						
PNI Grandiosity	0.25**	0.29**	0.29**	0.11*	0.07	0.09
PNI Vulnerability	-0.02	-0.11	-0.04	0.03	0.04	0.21**
Primary Psychopathy	0.32**	0.33**	0.08	0.50**	0.39**	0.29**
Secondary Psychopathy	0.12*	0.06	0.07	0.11*	0.06	0.09
Machiavellianism	0.01	-0.11*	-0.15**	0.01	0.05	0.02
Men						
PNI Grandiosity	0.08	0.28	0.21	0.11	0.01	-0.06
PNI Vulnerability	-0.00	-0.10	0.00	0.03	0.07	0.14
Primary Psychopathy	0.22*	0.11	-0.10	0.32**	0.31**	0.26**
Secondary Psychopathy	0.30**	0.28*	0.20	0.34**	0.27**	0.38**
Machiavellianism	0.00	-0.02	-0.07	-0.09	-0.07	-0.13

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

report working hard to achieve fame or desiring fame for reasons of improving feelings of self-worth.

Another possibility for the sex difference in patterns of association between secondary psychopathy and dimensions of fame interest could possibly be related to sex differences in the value of risk-taking. Following evolutionary accounts of secondary psychopathy (e.g., Mealey 1995), individuals high in this dark personality feature may adopt a fast life history strategy and may be more likely to engage in risk-taking (Lyons 2015; McDonald et al. 2012). Further, men have been found to be more likely to take risks in a number of domains to achieve higher status and attract mates, possibly because they may stand to benefit more, reproductively speaking, from these risks (Wang et al. 2009). If striving to achieve fame status can be considered a form of risk-taking, as the vast majority of individuals to seek fame status do not achieve it, then the current results are in line with previous research finding that men are more likely to take these sorts of risks (e.g., Wang et al. 2009). It is important to note that these explanations are purely speculation.

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