

LIFE SATISFACTION AND GENDER DIFFERENCES IN DARK TRIAD PERSONALITY TRAITS



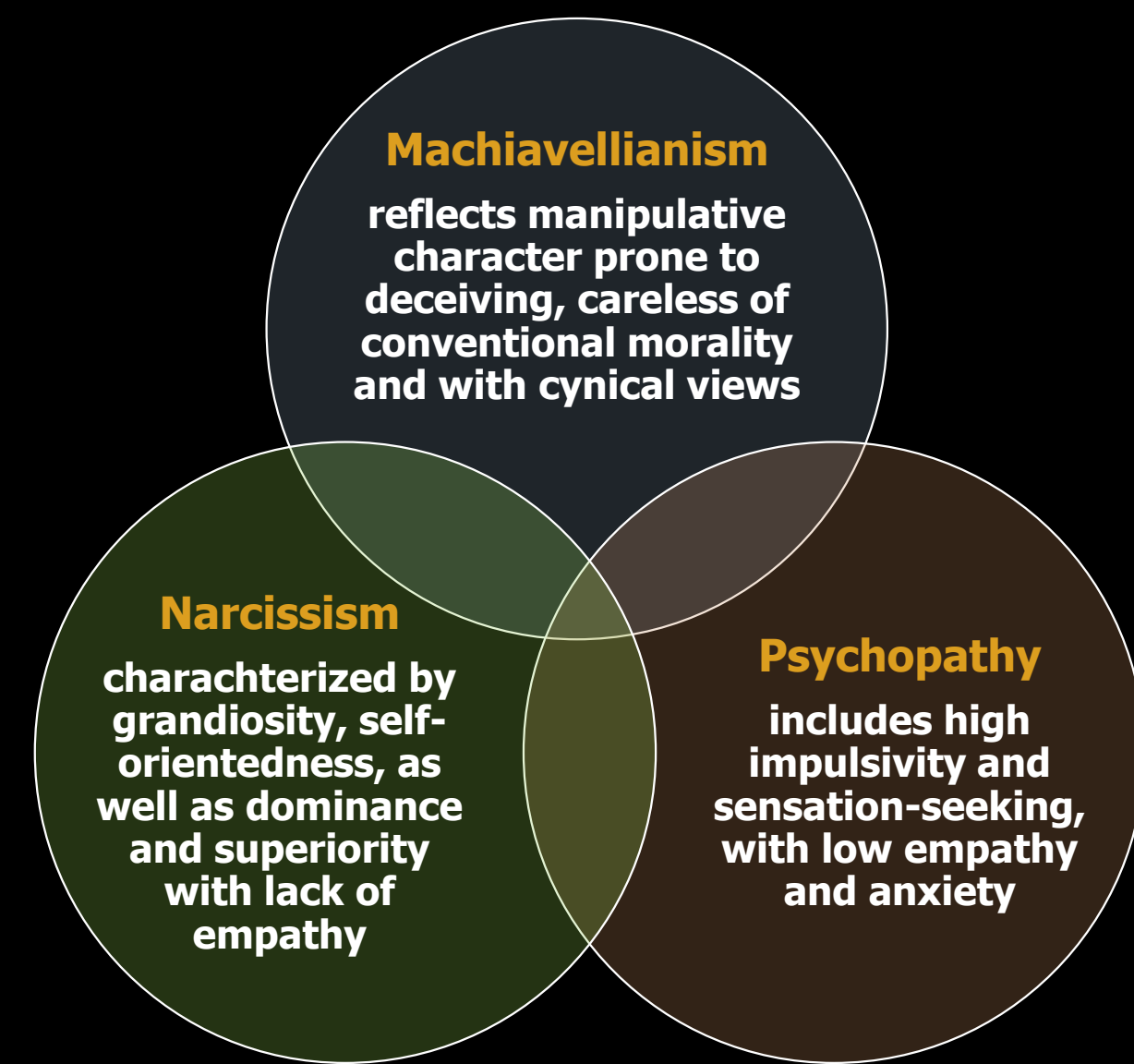
Anja Wertag¹ & Ivana Hanzec²

¹ Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar, Zagreb, Croatia

² Department of Psychology, Centre for Croatian Studies, University of Zagreb, Croatia

INTRODUCTION

For the past decade, the interest in so-called "dark personalities" is expanding. The Dark Triad (i.e. Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy) framework represents correlated subclinical personality traits that capture these socially aversive personality traits. Although the number of papers on Dark Triad is large, only a few studies examined its relation to life satisfaction, indicating that Machiavellianism and psychopathy are negatively associated with life satisfaction (e.g. Ali & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2010), while that association is positive in the case of narcissism (e.g. Rose, 2002). In addition, men consistently score higher on Dark Triad traits (e.g. Jonason et. al, 2009). However, to our knowledge there is no research on relation of Dark Triad personality traits and life satisfaction regarding gender differences.



AIM

The aim of this study was to investigate the relation of Dark Triad personality traits and life satisfaction, as well as gender differences on these traits.

METHOD

Participants 642 students from various faculties of University of Zagreb (383 females, 259 males) with the mean age of 21.73 years ($SD = 1.94$).

Measures

Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener et al., 1985) - 5 items assessing participant's self-perceived global life satisfaction ($\alpha = .773$). Participants estimate their agreement with each statement on a five-point Likert scale (1= *Totally disagree*; 5= *Totally agree*). Higher score reflects higher satisfaction with life.

For the purpose of this study, SWLS results were recoded into a categorical variable (low ($N = 96$) – medium ($N = 457$) – high ($N = 89$)), following Pavot's and Diener's (1993) directions.

Short Dark Triad scale (SD3-28) (Paulhus & Johnes, 2011) - 28 items measuring 3 subscales: Machiavellianism (10 items; $\alpha = .761$), Narcissism (9 items; $\alpha = .655$) and Psychopathy (9 items; $\alpha = .744$). Participants estimate to which extent they agree or disagree with every item on a five-point Likert scale (1= *Totally disagree*; 5= *Totally agree*). The total score is calculated for each subscale, with a higher score indicating higher level of the Dark Triad trait.

RESULTS

A 2 [male vs female] \times 3 [low SWLS vs medium SWLS vs high SWLS] MANOVA was computed with the Dark Triad scores as dependent variables. There was a significant multivariate gender effect ($F_{3,634} = 16.900$; $p < .001$; Wilks' $\lambda = .926$; $\eta^2 = .018$) and SWLS effect ($F_{6,1268} = 3.892$; $p = .001$; Wilks' $\lambda = .964$; $\eta^2 = .074$). In addition, there was a significant gender by SWLS interaction effect ($F_{6,1268} = 2.758$; $p = .01$; Wilks' $\lambda = .974$; $\eta^2 = .013$).

Machiavellianism

There was a significant main effect for gender ($F_{1,636} = 42.519$, $p = .000$, $\eta^2 = .063$) and satisfaction with life ($F_{2,636} = 5.007$, $p = .006$, $\eta^2 = .016$). Males ($M = 3.261$, $SD = 0.607$) had higher results on Machiavellianism than females ($M = 2.912$, $SD = 0.570$). Scheffe post hoc test suggested that there is a significant difference on Machiavellianism only between students with high ($M = 2.926$, $SD = 0.635$) and low SWLS results ($M = 3.155$, $SD = 0.578$).

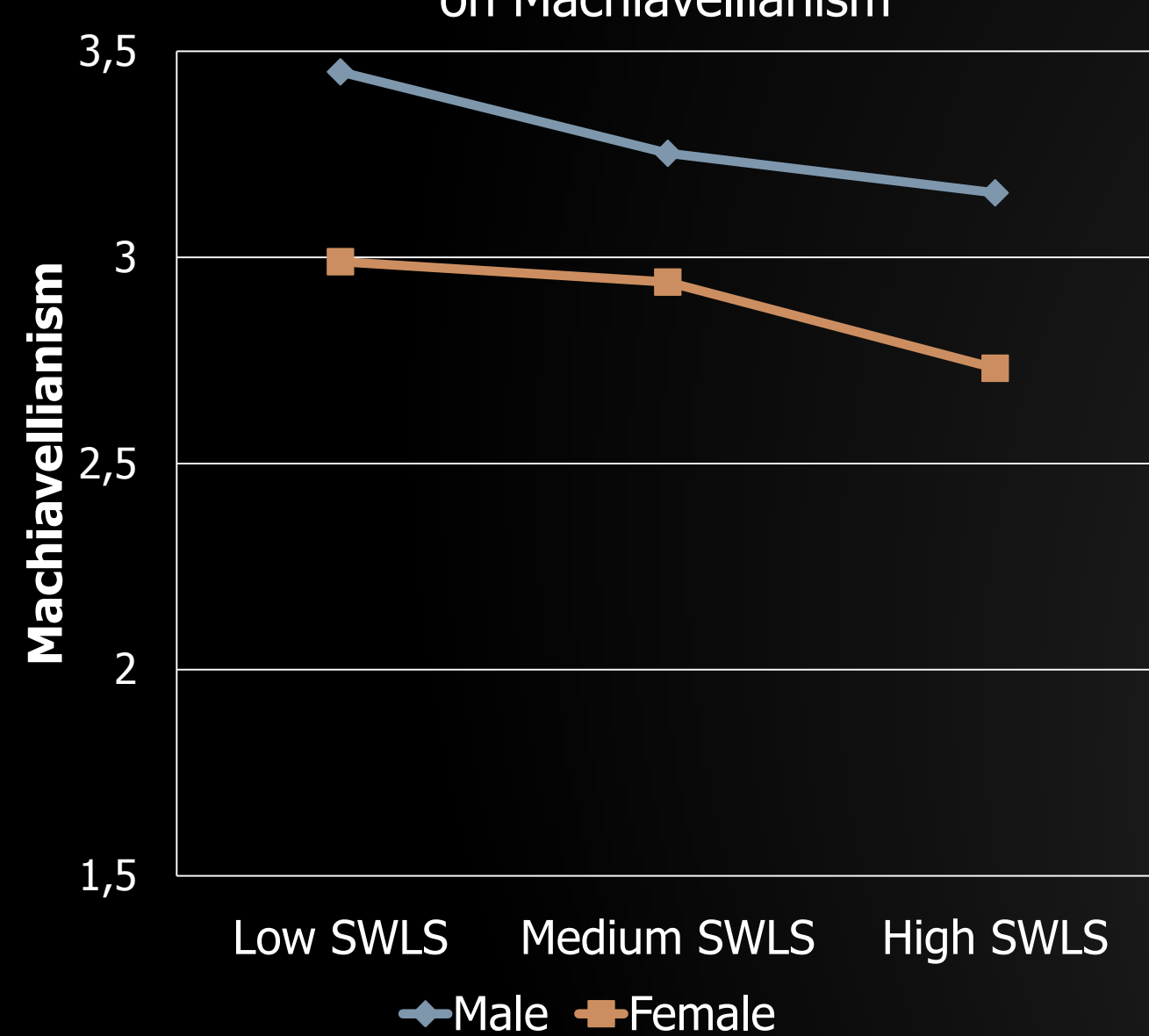
Narcissism

There was no significant main effect for gender nor satisfaction with life, but their interaction effect was significant ($F_{2,636} = 2.148$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .022$). Females with higher life satisfaction had higher scores on narcissism ($M = 2.919$, $SD = 0.446$), while males with the highest score on narcissism were those with low life satisfaction ($M = 2.934$, $SD = 0.553$).

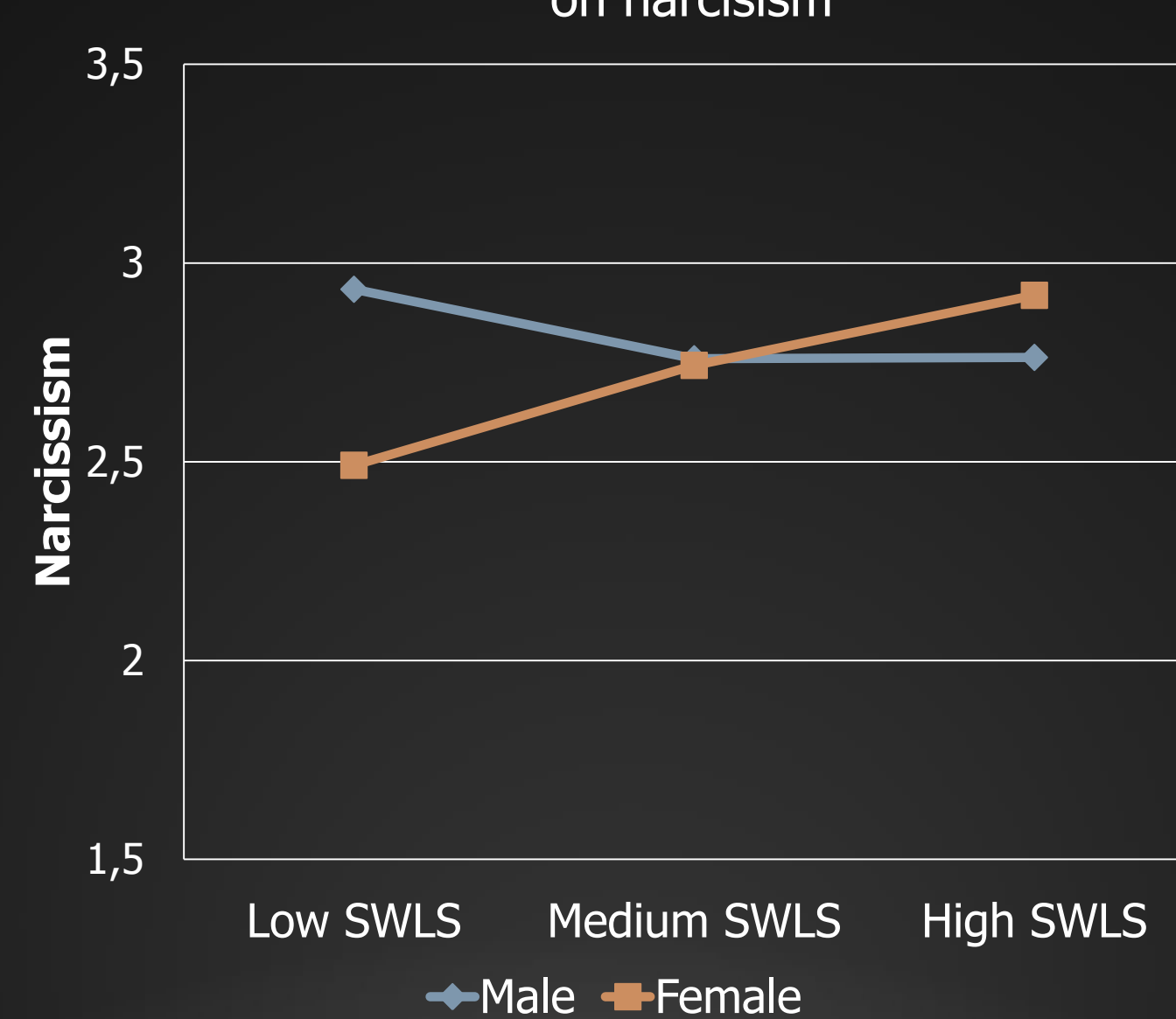
Psychopathy

There was a significant main effect for gender ($F_{1,636} = 32.600$, $p = .000$, $\eta^2 = .049$) and satisfaction with life ($F_{2,636} = 4.884$, $p = .008$, $\eta^2 = .015$). Males ($M = 2.360$, $SD = 0.640$) had higher results on Psychopathy than females ($M = 2.009$, $SD = 0.575$). Scheffe post hoc test suggested that there is a significant difference on Psychopathy only between students with high ($M = 2.001$, $SD = 0.648$) and medium SWLS results ($M = 2.174$, $SD = 0.629$).

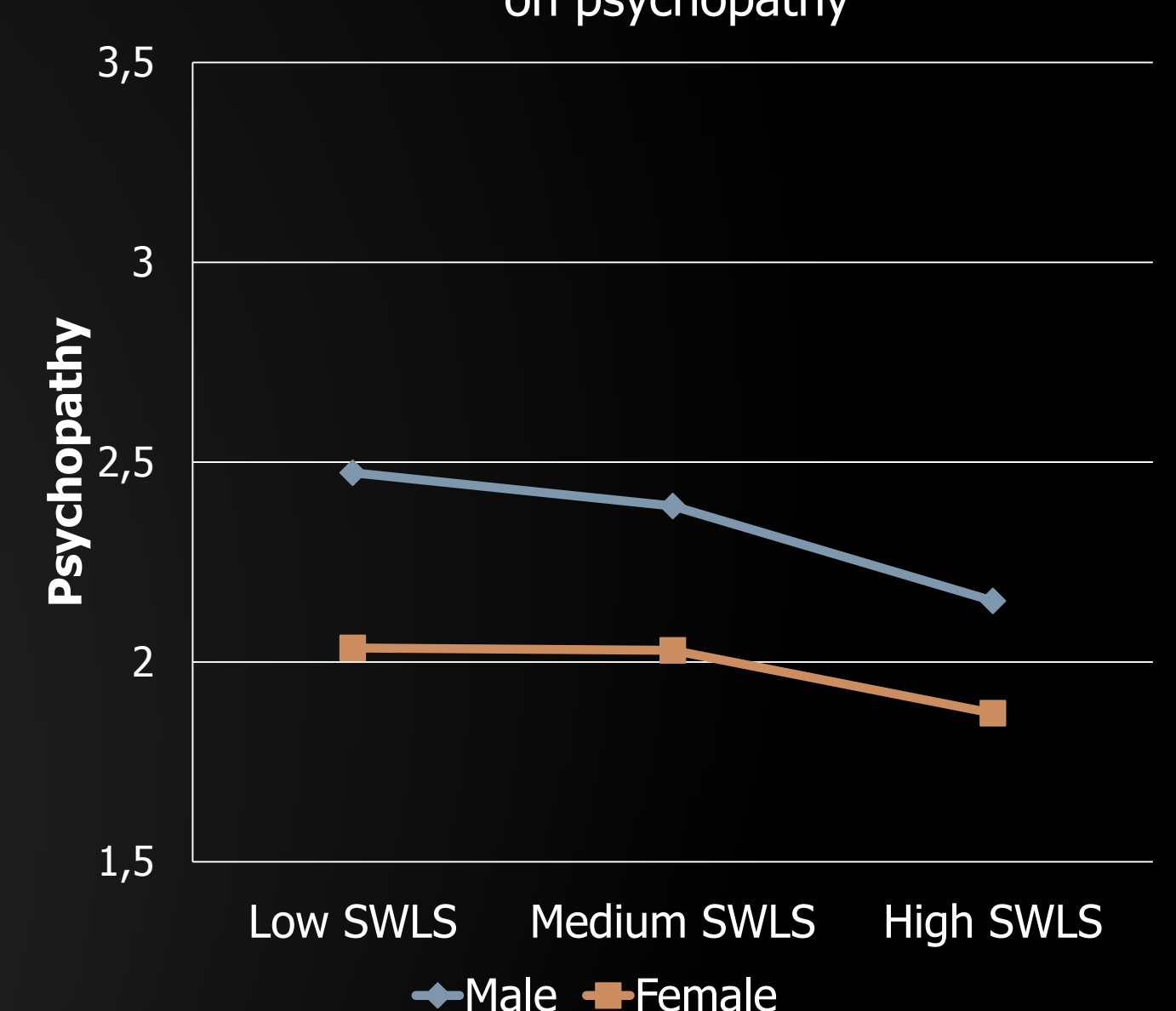
Graph 1. Main and interaction effects of gender and SWLS on Machiavellianism



Graph 2. Main and interaction effects of gender and SWLS on narcissism



Graph 3. Main and interaction effects of gender and SWLS on psychopathy



CONCLUSION

Results indicate that Machiavellianism and psychopathy are, as expected, more pronounced in males, and that students with high life satisfaction are lower on Machiavellianism and psychopathy than those with medium and low life satisfaction. However, statistically significant interaction of gender and SWLS indicated that females with high life satisfaction have higher scores on narcissism, while males with higher scores on narcissism have lower life satisfaction. These results confirm existence of gender differences in dark personality traits, and show interesting patterns of relation of Dark Triad personality traits and life satisfaction when gender is taken into account.

REFERENCES

1. Ali, F., & Chamorro-Premuzic, T. (2010). The dark side of love and life satisfaction: Associations with intimate relationships, psychopathy and Machiavellianism. *Personality and Individual Differences, 48*(2), 228–233.
2. Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. (1985). The Satisfaction with Life Scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 49*, 71-75.
3. Jonason, P. K., Li, N. P., Webster, G. W., & Schmitt, D. P. (2009). The Dark Triad: Facilitating short-term mating in men. *European Journal of Personality, 23*, 5-18.
4. Paulhus, D. L., & Jones, D. N. (2011, January). *Introducing a short measure of the Dark Triad*. Poster presented at the meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, San Antonio.
5. Pavot, W., & Diener, E. (1993). Review of the Satisfaction with Life Scale. *Psychological Assessment, 5*, 164-172.
6. Rose, P. (2002). The happy and unhappy faces of narcissism. *Personality and Individual Differences, 33*(3), 379–391.