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Sociosexual Orientation and Dark Triad Personality Traits Impact on Deception in Relationships

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**Sociosexual Orientation and Dark Triad Personality Traits Impact on Deception in
Relationships**

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Psychology

Murray State University

Murray, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

of Master's in Clinical Psychology

by Kristin Kennedy

Abstract

Within the last 10 years, research has suggested that it has become more common for individuals to engage in casual sex. Research has consistently shown that sociosexual orientation, dark triad traits, and deception are all related. This study sought to examine the linear relationship between sociosexual orientation, dark triad personality characteristics, and the use of deception in a relationship. Participants ($n = 135$) completed this study online and were recruited from a midsize university. Findings did suggest a positive correlation between sociosexuality and deception, as well as a positive correlation between dark triad traits and deception. The findings of this study are consistent with previous research, indicating that those that have an unrestricted sociosexuality were more willing to engage in deception in order to engage in sexual activity. Previous research also supported that those who are high in dark triad traits are more willing to engage in deception within a relationship in order to engage in sex. This study has implications for understanding the positive linear relationship between sociosexuality, dark triad traits, and deception.

Keywords: sociosexual orientation, sociosexuality, dark triad, narcissism, psychopathy, Machiavellianism, deception, relationships

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review

There are a number of individual differences that impact relationships, such as sex, situation, and personality characteristics. Additionally, research suggests that the motivation to mate is a universal and innate desire for humans since it facilitates reproductive success and relationship satisfaction (Conroy-Beam & Buss, 2019). Some individuals have expressed this sexual desire more than others, as evidenced by an increase in casual sex relationships in the last ten years, and some (e.g., Grello et al., 2006) have suggested that half of young adults have engaged in a casual sex relationship. These relationships are short-term and low in commitment, so these types of relationships tend to be common in those who are high in these dark personality traits. Research has suggested that there is a reproductive benefit for those who are high in these dark personality traits. This study examines how sociosexual orientation and dark triad traits (a group of three negative personality traits) correlate with the use of deception within a relationship.

Sociosexual Orientation

First introduced by Kinsey, sociosexuality is a construct that refers to individual differences in the willingness to engage in casual sex without the emotional commitment of a partner (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1949; Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, & Gebhard, 1998). Sociosexual orientation can therefore range from constricted (i.e., fewer sexual partners and a preference for a long-term, committed relationship) to unrestricted (i.e., a larger number of sexual partners and a preference for short-term relationships; Penke & Asendorpf, 2008). Individuals on the unrestricted end of the continuum tend to accept casual sex, while those on the restricted end of the continuum tend to prefer to combine love with sex (Sprecher, Treger, & Sakaluk, 2013). Individuals on the unrestricted end of sociosexual orientation are more willing to

engage in sexual activity in the absence of commitment and emotional bonding (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991), engage in sexual infidelity (Barta & Kiene, 2005), and have tendencies to flirt more (Asendorpf & Penke, 2005). They tend to be more comfortable engaging in having short-term relationships without any emotional bonding (Simpson & Gangstead, 1991). In contrast, individuals on the restricted end of the continuum desire closeness and emotional bonding with a partner before engage in sexual activity (Banai & Pavela, 2015).

Within the past 40 years, research has indicated that individuals differ on multiple facets of sociosexuality, including variation in the number of sexual partners, past sexual behavior, future sexual behavior, willingness to engage in concurrent sexual behavior, the frequency of sexual fantasies, and attitudes about engaging in casual sex (Simpson et al., 2004). Sociosexual orientation is also correlated with a number of individual difference variables. For example, individuals who are more extroverted are more likely to fall on the unrestricted side of the continuum rather than people who are introverted (Fernández del Rio et al., 2019). Research has also suggested that individuals with an unrestricted sociosexual orientation have a lack of constraint and disinhibition (Simpson et al., 2004), and that people with an unrestricted sociosexual orientation tend to be less religious (Haddad et al., 2016), less politically and socially conservative (Petersen, 2018), and better educated (Morrison, et al., 2013). There is also evidence that individuals who have an interest in casual sex tend to have more emotional immaturity, egocentrism, and a lack of self-insight, and people with an unrestricted sociosexual orientation tend to be more impulsive, extroverted, and are more likely to take risks, while individuals with a restricted orientation tend to be more introverted, less impulsive, and less likely to take risks (Simpson et al., 2004).

Attachment styles also have been consistently shown to have a relationship with sociosexual orientation. Having sustained intimacy and emotional dependence in relationships has been related to engaging in short-term relationships and have an avoidant attachment style (i.e., distancing oneself from their partner when they feel distressed). It was also found that individuals with an unrestricted style felt unsure about their feelings toward their partners, feeling frustrated with their partners because they feel unappreciated or unloved, and a stronger need to be self-reliant and not ask their partner for help. (Brennan & Shaver, 1995). Individuals with a secure attachment style (i.e., feeling comfortable to trust and depend their partner) were found to be on the restricted end of the sociosexual continuum (Simon, 1997). Lastly, individuals with an anxious attachment style (i.e., worries about their romantic partner abandoning them) were found to have a more restricted sociosexual orientation and were found to be clingy and possessive of their partners (Stephan & Bachman, 1999). Individuals with an unrestricted sociosexual orientation tend to have more unsecure attachment styles while those with a restricted orientation tend to have more secure attachment styles (Simpson et al., 2004).

With respect to relationships, research has shown that sociosexuality and mating motivations differ for individuals with a restricted and unrestricted sociosexual orientation. Individuals with an unrestricted sociosexual orientation have been found to have more of an intrinsic motivation to seek mutual satisfaction in a relationship and have a greater sense of commitment in their relationship (Jones, 1998). People with a restricted orientation and have intrinsic motivation tend to be more committed to maintaining their relationship and value intimacy, commitment, affection, trust, and faithfulness (Simpson et al., 2004). When acquiring a romantic partner, individuals with an unrestricted orientation rated their partner's physical attraction and sex appeal as more important, while people with a restricted orientation focused on

characteristics of positive parenting qualities (Simpson & Gangestad, 1992). Individuals with a restricted orientation place more importance on partner warmth, trustworthiness, intimacy, and loyalty compared to people with an unrestricted orientation (Fletcher et al., 1999). Seal and colleagues (1994) found that unrestricted individuals who are in an exclusive relationship were more likely to engage in other romantic involvements rather than unrestricted individuals.

Research has consistently shown sex differences in sociosexual orientation. Sprecher and colleagues (2013) found that men reported more permissive attitudes about casual sex and a more unrestricted sociosexuality than women. More men than women reported that having sex in uncommitted relationships was more acceptable and engaged in more permissive behavior. Men are more characterized by short-term mating strategies, such as having multiple partners which allows them to have multiple offspring to ensure that their genes will be passed on to the next generation (Schmitt et al., 2001). Women are more likely to have fewer sexual partners and be oriented towards commitment and long-term relationships (Jonason et al., 2009). It has also been found that for women who do not want to become emotionally attached to romantic partners, engaging in sexual activity leads to them feeling more emotionally vulnerable and unsure about their partners commitment. In contrast, men desire sexual activity and are less concerned about their partner's commitment and less emotionally committed (Townsend, 1995). Women with an unrestricted orientation were found to be more willing to engage in sexual exploration, a greater sense of sexual arousal, felt more appreciated sexually, and improved their attraction and seduction skills due to short-term dating (Greiling & Buss, 2000). Research has suggested that women with an unrestricted sociosexual orientation desired those with moderate to extensive levels of sexual experience, while those with an unrestricted orientation desired those who were sexually inexperienced (Sprecher et al., 1997).

Unrestricted sexual behavior has also been associated with the Dark Triad, a group of three negative personality traits, as individuals with these characteristics prefer partners that are socially visible and physically attractive (Koladich & Atkinson, 2016). Evidence has suggested that people who are high in dark triad characteristics prefer relationships with game-playing mating strategies with multiple partners, using their partners for their own gain, maintaining short-term mating strategies, and avoid becoming emotionally invested into their relationships (Jonason & Kavanagh, 2010). Research has also suggested that dark triad traits improve an individual's fitness by helping them not only attract more partners, but also attract mates that are more genetically desirable (Jonason & Buss, 2012).

The Dark Triad's Impact on Sexual Relationships

The Dark Triad is a group of three related but distinct personality traits: narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Dark personality traits are considered socially undesirable due to their being potentially harmful, manipulative, and deceiving behaviors, lack of empathy, duplicity, and coldness (Jonason & Schmitt, 2012; Wissing & Reinhard, 2019). The measurement of these traits is to uncover the maladaptive side of the individual, so deception is expected in these personality traits. Individuals high in Dark Triad traits prefer short-term mating, since such relationships result in pleasure and resources without the costs of being invested in a committed, long-term relationship (Valentova et al., 2020). Individuals high in dark triad personality traits facilitate exploitative mating characteristics, favor short-term relationships, and partners with low levels of emotional intimacy and commitment (Marcinkowska, Brewer et al., 2021).

Narcissism is a pathological form of self-love and has a personality that is grandiose and superior. Narcissism includes personality traits of attention seeking, vanity, conceit, egotism, and

deceit in interpersonal relationships (Jakobwitz & Egan, 2005). Individuals high in narcissism are most likely to lie about their appearance which is consistent with their desire for status, prestige, and their focus on physical attractiveness (Jonason et al., 2014). People who are high in narcissism may use deception to win admiration or to avoid embarrassment. Narcissists will use deception for their own self-gain, and tend to overestimate their own abilities, due to their love for self, and this overestimation may lead to the belief that they are good at deceiving others. Romantic relationships with individuals high in narcissism lack commitment, are emotionally shallow, and nonintimate. They will typically have an inflated idealization of their partner, and individuals high in narcissism typically use their partner to meet self-esteem needs. Narcissists are more interested in dating someone who is successful and not interested in a close and intimate relationship (Campbell & Foster, 2002). Moore, Ross, and Brosius (2020) found that narcissism was significantly correlated with sociosexual behavior in men and was strongly correlated with infidelity for both genders.

Psychopathy involves characteristics such as spontaneity, thrill seeking, and low empathy (Paulhus, 2014). Psychopathy also involves manipulations, pathological lying, and deceptive presentation styles. Psychopaths have a callous disregard for the feelings and the well-being of others. Psychopathy has also been associated with impaired social relationships and social reasoning (Moore et al., 2020). Individuals who are high in psychopathy may deceive for their own personal gain and may be willing to lie no matter what to get what they want. It is common for psychopaths to have short, unstable sexual relationships. Psychopathy was related to the use of both sexual and nonsexual deception. Psychopathy has a tendency of deceiving and not a specific tendency to for sexual deception (Seto et al., 1997). Jonason and colleagues (2014) found psychopathy is related to lies for dominance, sincerity, and sexual intentions. Research has

suggested that individuals who were high in psychopathy reported having more sexual partners, idealized their partners, and having sex for the first time at a younger age (Moore et al., 2020). It was also found that the desire for infidelity was higher for women than for men.

Individuals who are high in Machiavellianism tend to have interpersonal strategies that are used for self-interest, deception, and manipulation (Jones & Paulhus, 2009). Machiavellians are perceived to be more intelligent, persuasive, and attractive by their peers (Jakobwitz & Egan, 2005). People high in Machiavellianism tend to manipulate others using qualities such as deception, flattery, and emotional detachment. Machiavellians have emotionally manipulated and used deceptive tactics in favor of their own personal gain/agenda. Notably, deception tactics that Machiavellians often use include white lies, flattery, bargaining, emotional blackmail, and blocking, and these manipulative strategies and deception may be more effective in short-term relationships rather than long-term relationships (Wilson et al., 1996). Individuals who are high in Machiavellianism tend to avoid relationships, and they tend to have difficulties with intimacy and are more likely to engage in short-term relationships of sexual nature. Additionally, Machiavellians have low levels of emotional attachment in their close relationships. They are less invested in their partner and more interested in satisfying their own personal desires (Dussault et al., 2013). Their relationships include disloyalty, sharing intimate details of sex life, and pretending to love their partner (Jonason et al., 2009).

The Role of Deception in Sexual Relationships

Metts (1989) defines deception as: "the intentional misrepresentation of information in order to induce in another person a belief that the deceiver knows to be untrue" (p. 160). Deception and lying are a prevalent part of everyday life and a nearly universal human behavioral pattern (Tosone, 2006). Most people want to believe that their relationships are

characterized by truthfulness, but in most cases that is not the reality. Most people have lied to a romantic partner, remember a situation where they were not completely honest, have been withholding information, or trying to avoid certain issues all together (Cole, 2001). Deception in interpersonal relationships requires little effort or planning and is governed by emotions.

Guthrie and Kunkel (2013) found that the median use of deception in a romantic relationship was three to seven times during a week. Individuals often engage in lying and forms of deception at least two times a day and deceive and tell lies to people, including close friends, dating partners, and spouses. (DePaulo, 2009). These findings could be because the partner may have found that telling the truth causes more damage to the relationship rather than using deceptive strategies; and that using deception to avoid a topic or a fight is easier than telling the truth and saw it as the appropriate response because it will benefit the self, partner, or relationship.

Common motives of deception in relationships include other-benefitting, self-serving, to maintain privacy, to protect autonomy, relational control, avoid conflict, maintain positivity, elicit feelings of jealousy, self-presentation reasons, protect their partner's feelings, and to avoid unwanted activities and impositions (Guthrie & Kunkel, 2013). Other-benefitting acts of deception are to serve the one who is deceived, while self-serving acts of deception are for the interests and goals of the deceiver (Wehofsits, 2023).

Metts (1989) examined three forms of deception including omissions, distortion, and contradiction. Omission is the withholding of relevant information. One in a relationship may find it easier to omit information, rather than falsify information, due to it being easier to conceal information than remember the details of the falsification. Distortion is an exaggeration of the truth. Distortion is used to tell part of the truth but change it in a way to help keep your

relationship. Lastly, contradiction is asserting information that goes against the truth.

Contradiction allows for the person to not reveal the truth and reveal information that allows them to maintain their relationship. Metts' (1989) research was based on the belief that deception in relationships is to protect the harmony of the relationship.

A number of studies (e.g., Guthrie & Kunkel, 2013; Horan & Booth-Butterfield, 2013; Peterson, 1996) found that one motivation for deception is relational maintenance, which is the effort made to keep a relationship. While the use of deception can destroy the trust built between romantic partners, lying may be more desirable than telling the truth in some instances, and being completely honest could make the relationship difficult due to conflict, awkward situations, or hurt feelings. For example, a partner may use deception in a relationship because they believed they were doing a favor for the relationship and benefitting the relationship by not telling the complete truth, to protect their privacy and maintain personal boundaries within the relationship, and to protect the partner's autonomy so that the partner can maintain their personal hobbies. There may be a need for deception in a relationship due to partners being overly constrictive of one another and needing personal lives separate of one another since intimacy can make several constraints. Lastly, another motive for deception is relational control, where the partner uses deception to avoid constrictive, overly inquisitive partners. Deception may ensure that their partners feel that they behave in the way that the deceiver expects. Guthrie and Kunkel (2013) also found that in relationships, people are quite confident in their ability to detect when their partner is deceiving them, but partners are not accurate at judging when their partner is deceiving them. The more the person believes they are successfully deceiving their partner, the more likely they are to continue their efforts to maintain the deception rather than confess the

truth. Additionally, the more an individual credits their partner with success at deceiving them, the more likely they are to use their own tactics to try and uncover the truth.

Chapter 2: The Present Study

The present study examines the relationship of sociosexual orientation and dark triad personality traits on the use of deception in the relationship. Specifically, I hypothesize the following: First, individuals high in narcissism tend to have a love for self (Jakobwitz & Egan, 2005). Previous research suggests that people high in narcissism are more likely to use deception for their own personal gain (Jonason et al., 2014). Given these findings, it is hypothesized that there will be a positive correlation between narcissism and deception.

Second, as previous research suggests that psychopaths are willing to use deception at any cost to gain what they want (Seto et al., 1997), it is hypothesized that there will be a positive relationship between psychopathy and deception.

Third, since research suggests that individuals high in Machiavellianism use deceptive strategies for their own personal gain (Dussault et al., 2013), it is hypothesized that Machiavellianism and deception will be positively correlated.

Finally, individuals who have an unrestricted sociosexual orientation are more likely to engage in sexual activity outside of a committed relationship (Penke & Asendorpf, 2008). As such, it is hypothesized that there will be a positive correlation between sociosexuality and deception.

Chapter 3: Method

Participants

University undergraduate students from a midwestern university ($N = 135$) were recruited for this study. The sample included 18.8% male ($n = 34$) and 65.7% female ($n = 119$) participants. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 28 years ($M = 19.14$, $SD = 1.39$). A majority (84%; $n = 129$) of participants were white, 9% ($n = 14$) were black or African American, and the remainder (7%; $n = 11$) self-identified as other groups. Reported sexual orientation of participants consisted of 64.1% of participants identifying as heterosexual ($n = 116$), 2.8% of participants identifying as gay/lesbian ($n = 5$), 11.6% of participants identifying as bisexual ($n = 21$), and 5.5% identifying as other ($n = 10$). Note that because a small number of participants do not have scores for every measure, combined with the fact that listwise deletion was applied on a per-analysis basis, numbers from demographic statistics and degrees of freedom for each analysis may not line up as one would expect if complete data were present.

Procedure

Participants were recruited to participate in this study using SONA, an online participant recruiting system that is maintained by the psychology department. Once the participants were registered for the study, they were given an online survey consisting of a demographic questionnaire, the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory - Revised, the Short Dark Triad, and the Use of Deception Questionnaire. Once the participants completed the online surveys, they were given course credit for their participation. To ensure anonymity, students only were required to give their SONA IDs to receive credit for completing the survey. Given the commonality of casual sex relationships among college students, this population is deemed appropriate for this study. A power analysis was conducted and indicated that $n = 150$ participants were needed.

Materials

In addition to a demographic questionnaire, participants were given the following measures: the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory – Revised, the Use of Deception Questionnaire, and the Short Dark Triad.

Sociosexual Orientation Inventory – Revised

The Sociosexual Orientation Inventory – Revised was used in this study to measure participants willingness to engage in sexual experiences (Penke & Asendorf, 2008). The measure consists of nine items, and participants indicate how often each stated item applies to them. The three scales are measured on a 9-point response scale: sociosexual behaviors (1 = 0; 9 = 20 or more), sociosexual attitudes (1 = *strongly disagree*; 9 = *strongly agree*), and sociosexual desire (1 = *never*, 9 = *at least once a day*). Some examples statements of the measure include for sociosexual attitudes “Sex without love is OK,” for sociosexual desires “In everyday life, how often do you have spontaneous fantasies about having sex with someone you have just met,” and for sociosexual behaviors “With how many partners have you had sex with within the past 12 months?” The reliability of the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory was acceptable for all scales: sociosexual behavior ($\alpha = .74$), sociosexual attitudes ($\alpha = .85$), and sociosexual desire ($\alpha = .88$); while the reliability of the entire measure was acceptable ($\alpha = .83$; Freyth & Jonason, 2023).

Use of Deception Questionnaire

The Use of Deception Questionnaire was used in this study to measure the use of deception in a relationship and one’s willingness to engage in deception (Cole, 2001). The measure consists of nine items, and participants indicate how often each stated item applies to them on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 7 (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). The measure was modified for the purpose of this study to say sexual partner. Some example

statements of this scale include, “I sometimes find myself lying to my partner about things I have done,” “I try to hide certain things I have done from my partner,” and “When I don’t live up to my partner’s expectations, I always tell him/her what I’ve done.” The reliability of the Use of Deception Questionnaire was acceptable ($\alpha = .84$; Cole, 2001).

Short Dark Triad

The Short Dark Triad (SD3) is a measure of three socially aversive personalities (Jones & Paulhus, 2013). The measure consists of 27 items, along with three nine-item subscales (narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism). Participants indicate how often each stated item applies to them on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 5 (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). Some example statements on this scale include, “I like to use clever manipulation to get my way” to evaluate Machiavellianism, “I insist on getting the respect I deserve” to assess narcissism, and “People often say I’m out of control” to measure psychopathy. The reliability of the Short Dark Triad was acceptable ($\alpha = .88$); and the reliability was acceptable for all the subscales: narcissism ($\alpha = .71$), Machiavellianism ($\alpha = .77$), and psychopathy ($\alpha = .80$; Persson et al., 2017).

Chapter 4: Results

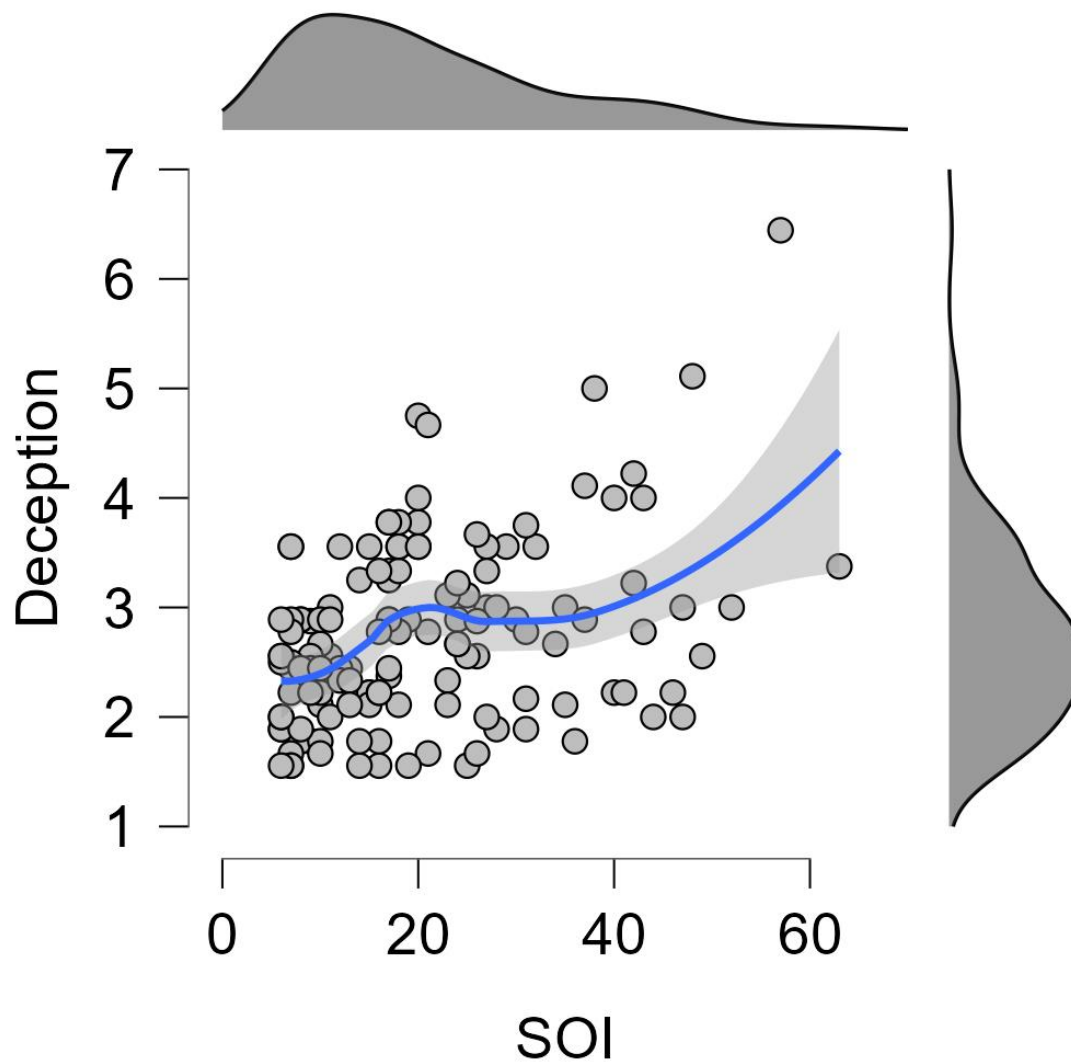
Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to assess the linear relationship between sociosexual orientation, dark triad personality characteristics, and deception in relationships. There was a weak, positive correlation found between dark triad characteristics and sociosexual orientation $r(133) = .30, p < .001$. Deception and sociosexual orientation were found to be positively, weakly correlated $r(133) = .37, p < .001$, which is shown in Figure 1. Dark triad personality traits and deception were found to be moderately, positively correlated $r(133) = .48, p < .001$, which is shown in Figure 2. All of these findings were consistent with the hypotheses presented in this study. Follow-up analyses were also conducted with outliers removed; no correlations were significantly affected.

To further investigate the relationship between the dark triad and key study variables, as well as address the three specific hypotheses specified previously, I also examined the correlation between each of the three dark triad subscales. Deception was significantly correlated with Machiavellianism, $r(133) = .41, p < .001$, narcissism, $r(133) = .23, p = .01$, and psychopathy, $r(133) = .47, p < .001$. Sociosexual orientation was significantly correlated with Machiavellianism, $r(133) = .27, p = .001$ and psychopathy, $r(133) = .41, p < .001$, but not narcissism, $r(133) = .06, p = .50$.

In order to further investigate the role of sex differences with respect to the correlations described above, I also ran separate correlations for male and female participants. Results for females were consistent with the analyses from the entire sample. Results from males were directionally consistent with analyses from the entire sample, but only one correlation (SOI and psychopathy) was statistically significant, $r(27) = .47, p = .01$. This is expected given the small number of male participants.

Figure 1

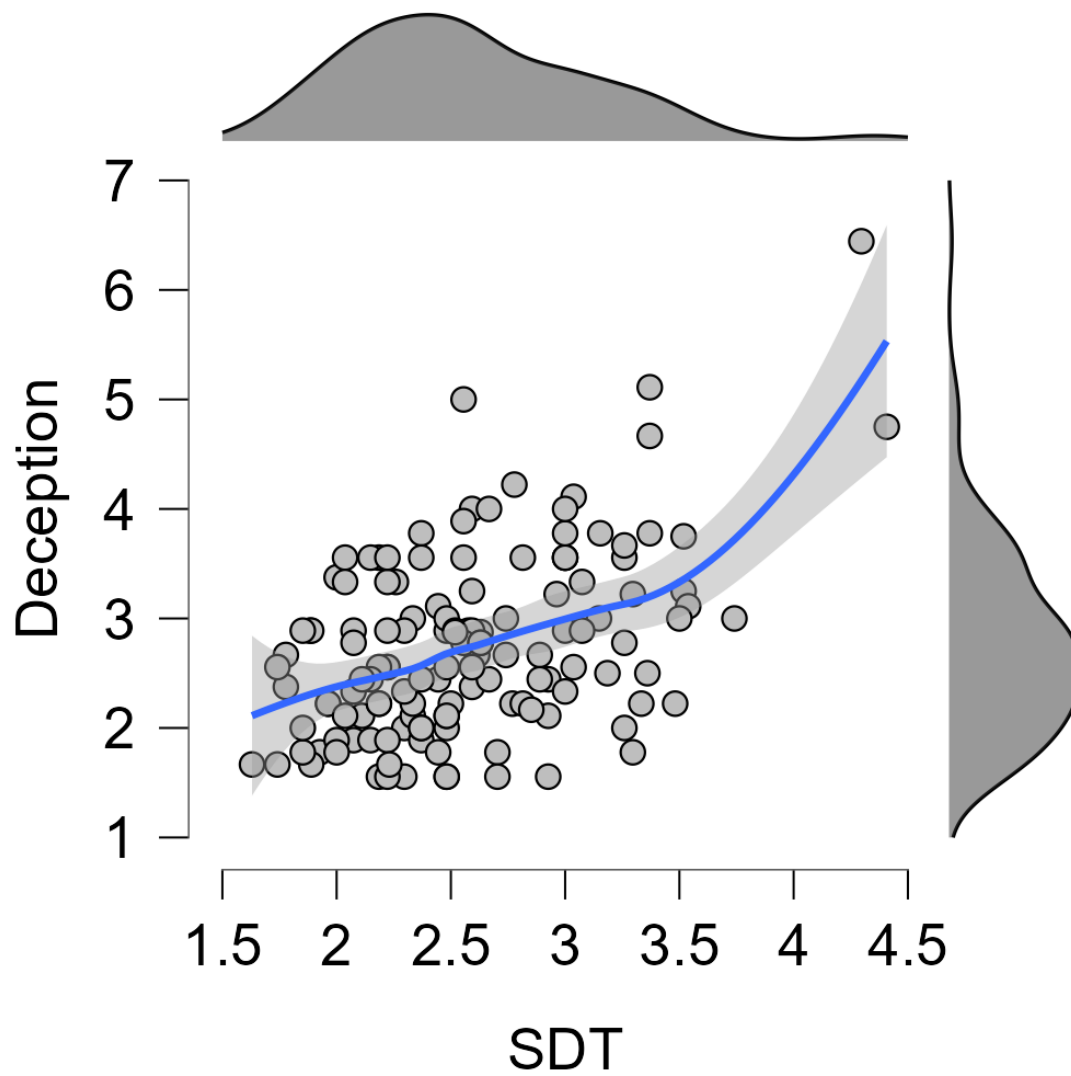
Relationship between Sociosexual Orientation and Deception



Note. Line of best fit was created using LOESS smoothing (see Wilkinson, 1999).

Figure 2

Relationship between Dark Triad Characteristics and Deception



Note. Line of best fit was created using LOESS smoothing (see Wilkinson, 1999). SDT is the Short Dark Triad which was used to measure Dark Triad personality traits.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The current study examines the relationship between sociosexual orientation, dark triad personality traits, and the use of deception in a relationship. Individuals who are high in these dark triad traits are less particular when acquiring a romantic partner for a short-term relationship in order to ensure they have a variety of partners to choose from (Jonason et al., 2011). Research has suggested that people who are high in these dark triad personality traits are considered more desirable among potential partners (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Jonason & Buss, 2012). Lastly, research has also been consistent in showing that individuals who are high in dark personality traits are more likely to have an unrestricted sociosexual orientation which may lead them to consider infidelity to be more acceptable in their relationships (Freyth & Jonason, 2023).

First, it was hypothesized that narcissism would be positively correlated with deception. This hypothesis was supported since participants who were high in narcissism were more likely to engage in deception within their relationship. Consistent with previous literature, the results suggest that individuals high in narcissism were more likely to engage in deception in order to protect their self-image and for their own personal gain, such as keeping their relationship or acquiring romantic partners (Jakobwitz & Egan, 2005).

Second, it was also hypothesized that psychopathy would have a positive relationship with deception. This hypothesis was supported since participants who were high in psychopathy were more willing to engage in deception within their relationship. These findings are consistent with previous research, which suggests that psychopaths are more willing to use deception for their own personal gain and they have no regard for others, so they engaged in deception to ensure sexual activity (Moore, Ross, & Brosius, 2020).

Third, it was hypothesized that Machiavellianism would be positively related to deception in the relationship. This hypothesis was supported because participants who were high in Machiavellianism were more willing to engage in deception within their relationship. These findings are consistent with previous research, which indicates that people high in Machiavellianism engage in deception more due to them using deception for their own personal agenda and to ensure sexual activity. Individuals high in Machiavellianism were more likely to manipulate others to ensure they get what they want and for sex. People who are high in Machiavellianism were found to have frequent encounters of uncommitted sex and heightened sexual desire without any bonding (Garcia, 2020).

In contrast to much of the literature on motivations for deception in relationships, which in part emphasizes the role of deception for relationship maintenance, this pattern of correlations between each of the three dark triad traits – as well as the dark triad as a whole – seems to imply a different set of motivations for deception in relationships. For example, individuals who are high in Machiavellianism tend to have opportunistic short-term relationships with a pragmatic and sarcastic attitude towards love (Haddad et al., 2016). Research has also suggested that Machiavellianism is positively correlated with the acceptance of infidelity and people high in this personality trait do not inform their partner of their infidelity (Freyth & Jonason, 2023). Additionally, individuals high in all three dark traits often manipulate others in order for them to gain power or fulfill their own desires (Cloninger, 2004). It seems possible that those high in any or all of the dark triad traits might use deception more in order to keep their relationship. The extent to which this qualifies as “relationship maintenance” (which may, in many cases, have a prosocial component; see, e.g., Levine & Lupoli, 2022) seems debatable. Future research should consider a wider array of “darker” motivations for deception in relationships.

Lastly, it was hypothesized that sociosexuality would be positively correlated with deception. This hypothesis was supported since those participants with an unrestricted sociosexual orientation were more likely to engage in deception within their relationships. These findings are supported by previous research suggesting that individuals engaging in infidelity often perceived these acts as they had deceived their partners. People with an unrestricted sociosexual orientation often have an agreement within the relationship with predefined boundaries when engaging in casual sex outside of the relationship and has been found to increase relationship satisfaction, personal well-being, and happiness (Rodrigues et al., 2016). Research has also suggested that individuals with an unrestricted sociosexual orientation value more physically and sexually attractive partners that also are more charismatic and less dependable (Simpson & Gangestad, 1992.) Research has also suggested that individuals with an unrestricted sociosexual orientation are more likely to engage in infidelity behaviors (e.g., exchanging phone numbers, asking for a date, sexual infidelity) most likely due to a lack of intimacy or investment in their relationship (Seal et al. 1994; Rodrigues & Lopes, 2017). These findings suggest that people with an unrestricted sociosexual orientation were more likely to use deception within their relationships to engage in sexual activity than individuals with a restricted orientation.

Two additional correlations also emerged in the present data that were not formally hypothesized. First, narcissism was found to be positively associated with unrestricted sociosexual orientation, such as frequent encounters of uncommitted sex, a promiscuous attitude towards uncommitted sex, and a heightened sexual desire (Garcia, 2020). This suggests that individuals high in narcissism often desire uncommitted sexual encounters without any emotional bonding. Among the three dark triad personality traits, narcissism has been found to

be the most socially successful personality trait for short-term relationships (Jonason et al., 2010; Jonason, Lyons, & Blanchard, 2015). Second, psychopathy was found to be positively correlated with unrestricted sexuality sociosexuality – consistent with previous research (e.g., Fernández del Rio et al., 2019) which shows that people high in psychopathy have a desire for promiscuous, uncommitted sexual encounters without any closeness (Garcia, 2020). Psychopathy has also been associated with an increase in motivation and openness to short-term mating and intentions toward infidelity (Moore et al., 2020).

Limitations

The present study is not without limitations. First, the study relied on self-report data which is well-known to several biases, such as memory recall and social desirability. With the focus of this study being on dark triad traits, sociosexual orientation, and deception, social desirability and impression management may have a negative impact on the reliability of the data, this could be addressed with more innovative research methods. Another limitation of this study is that the research is correlational and does not lead to causation. Further research will be needed to determine if the dark triad and sociosexual orientation influence deception within relationships by using other methods that can provide evidence of causal relationships. An additional limitation of this study being that the correlational relationships found in this study could be stronger if there was more variability within the sociosexuality scores. Another limitation of this study relates to the sample used: because participants were exclusively college students from a rural, southern area, social norms (especially those related to religious beliefs and associated injunctions regarding sexual practices), results may not generalize to other demographic groups or other cultural contexts.

Conclusion

This project sought to determine the relationship between sociosexual orientation and dark triad personality traits and the use of deception in the relationship. Narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism were all found to be positively correlated with the use of deception within the relationship. It was also found that individuals with an unrestricted sociosexual orientation were more likely to engage in deception in a relationship. These findings are consistent with previous research suggesting that the dark triad personality characteristics has been associated with an unrestricted sociosexual orientation and deception within their relationship to engage in sexual activity. Further research could benefit from determining if there is a darker motivation for deception in relationships.

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Appendix 1

Demographics

What is your sex? Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to answer

How do you identify yourself with respect to sexual orientation? Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Heterosexual
- Gay/lesbian
- Bisexual
- Other

Are you currently sexually active?

- Yes
- No

Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin? Please choose **only one** of the following:

- No, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
- Yes, Cuban
- Yes, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano
- Yes, Puerto Rican
- Other

What is your current age (in years)? Please write your answer here:

•

What is your race? Please choose **only one** of the following:

- White
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Black or African American
- Asian Indian
- Chinese
- Filipino
- Japanese
- Korean
- Vietnamese
- Native Hawaiian
- Guamanian or Chamorro
- Samoan
- Other

The Short Dark Triad (SD3)

Instructions: *Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements.*

1 = *disagree strongly*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *neither agree or disagree*, 4 = *agree*, 5 = *strongly agree*

- | | | | | | | |
|-----|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | It is not wise to tell your secrets. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. | I like to use clever manipulation to get my way. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. | Whatever it takes, you must get the important people on your side. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. | Avoid direct conflict with others because they may be useful in the future. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. | It's wise to keep track of information that you can use against people later. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. | You should wait for the right time to get back at people. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. | There are things you should hide from other people to preserve your reputation. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. | Make sure your plans benefit yourself, not others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. | Most people can be manipulated. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. | People see me as a natural leader. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. | I hate being the center of attention. I | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. | Many group activities tend to be dull without me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. | I know that I am special because everyone keeps telling me so. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. | I like to get acquainted with important people. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. | I feel embarrassed if someone compliments me. I | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. | I have been compared to famous people. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. | I am an average person. I | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. | I insist on the respect I deserve. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. | I like to get revenge on authorities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. | I avoid dangerous situations. I | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. | Payback needs to be quick and nasty. | | | | | |

	1	2	3	4	5
22.	People often say I am out of control.				
	1	2	3	4	5
23.	It's true that I can be mean to others.				
	1	2	3	4	5
24.	People who mess with me always regret it.				
	1	2	3	4	5
25.	I have never gotten into trouble with the law. I				
	1	2	3	4	5
26.	I enjoy having sex with people I hardly know.				
	1	2	3	4	5
27.	I'll say anything to get what I want.				
	1	2	3	4	5

Use of Deception Questionnaire

Instructions: *Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements.*

9. I disclose everything to my sexual partner, both good and bad. I

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Strongly</i>						<i>Strongly</i>
<i>Disagree</i>						<i>Agree</i>

2. I find myself lying to my sexual partner about things I have done.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Strongly</i>						<i>Strongly</i>
<i>Disagree</i>						<i>Agree</i>

3. I sometimes lie to my sexual partner.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Strongly</i>						<i>Strongly</i>
<i>Disagree</i>						<i>Agree</i>

4. I tell my sexual partner the complete truth, even things he/she does not want to hear. I

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Strongly</i>						<i>Strongly</i>
<i>Disagree</i>						<i>Agree</i>

5. I try to hide certain things that I have done from my sexual partner.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Strongly</i>						<i>Strongly</i>
<i>Disagree</i>						<i>Agree</i>

6. Please estimate the number of times you lie to your sexual partner during the course of a week.

7. There are certain issues that I try to conceal from my sexual partner.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Strongly</i>						<i>Strongly</i>
<i>Disagree</i>						<i>Agree</i>

8. There are certain things I try to mislead my sexual partner about.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Strongly</i>						<i>Strongly</i>
<i>Disagree</i>						<i>Agree</i>

9. When I don't live up to my sexual partner's expectations, I always tell him/her what I've done. I

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Strongly</i>						<i>Strongly</i>
<i>Disagree</i>						<i>Agree</i>

Please respond honestly to the following questions:

- [illegible]

9 – at least once a day

8. How often do you experience sexual arousal when you are in contact with someone you are *not* in a committed relationship with?

1 – never

2 – very seldom

3 – about once every two or three months

4 – about once a month

5 – about once every two weeks

6 – about once a week

7 – several times per week

8 – nearly every day

9 – at least once a day

9. In everyday life, how often do you have spontaneous fantasies about having sex with someone you have just met?

1 – never

2 – very seldom

3 – about once every two or three months

4 – about once a month

5 – about once every two weeks

6 – about once a week

7 – several times per week

8 – nearly every day

9 – at least once a day

Appendix 2

**Institutional Review Board**

328 Wells Hall
Murray, KY 42071-3318
270-809-2916 • msu.irb@murraystate.edu

TO: Sean Rife, College of Humanities and Fine Arts
FROM: Reigh Kemp, IRB Coordinator and Megan St. Peters
DATE: IRB Member 11/15/2023
RE: Human Subjects Protocol I.D. – IRB # 24-110

RK

The IRB has completed its review of your student's Exempt protocol entitled *Sociosexual Orientation and Dark Triad Personality Traits' Relationship to Deception*. After review and consideration, the IRB has determined that the research, as described in the protocol form, will be conducted in compliance with Murray State University guidelines for the protection of human participants.

The forms and materials that have been approved for use in this research study are attached to the email containing this letter. These are the forms and materials that must be presented to the subjects. Use of any process or forms other than those approved by the IRB will be considered misconduct in research as stated in the MSU IRB Procedures and Guidelines section 20.3.

Your stated data collection period is from 11/15/2023 to 11/15/2024.

If data collection extends beyond this period, please submit an Amendment to an Approved Protocol form detailing the new data collection period and the reason for the change.

This Exempt from further Review approval is valid until 11/14/2024.

If data collection and analysis extends beyond this date, the research project must be reviewed as a continuation project by the IRB prior to the end of the approval period, 11/14/2023. You must reapply for IRB approval by submitting a Project Update and Closure form (available at murraystate.edu/irb). You must allow ample time for IRB processing and decision prior to your expiration date, or your research must stop until such time that IRB approval is received. If the research project is completed by the end of the approval period, then a Project Update and Closure form must be submitted for IRB review so that your protocol may be closed. It is your responsibility to submit the appropriate paperwork in a

timely manner. The protocol is approved. You may begin data collection now.

Opportunity
afforded

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