

# Study: Internet Trolls are not nice people

By Chris Mooney, Slate

In the past few years, the science of Internet trollology has made some strides. Last year, for instance, we learned that by hurling insults and inciting discord in online comment sections, so-called Internet trolls (who are frequently anonymous) have a polarizing effect on audiences, leading to politicization, rather than deeper understanding of scientific topics.

That's bad, but it's nothing compared with what a new psychology paper has to say about the personalities of trolls themselves. The research, conducted by Erin Buckels of the University of Manitoba and two colleagues, sought to directly investigate whether people who engage in trolling are characterized by personality traits that fall in the so-called Dark Tetrad: Machiavellianism (willingness to manipulate and deceive others), narcissism (egotism and self-obsession), psychopathy (the lack of remorse and empathy), and sadism (pleasure in the suffering of others).

It is hard to underplay the results: The study found correlations, sometimes quite significant, between these traits and trolling behavior. What's more, it also found a relationship between all Dark Tetrad traits (except for narcissism) and the overall time that an individual spent, per day, commenting on the Internet.

**Read the whole story**