

THE DARK TRIAD AND THE ROMA: INTERGROUP EMOTIONS AND BEHAVIORAL TENDENCIES

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In this paper, we investigate the role that the dark personalities — psychopathy, Machiavellianism, narcissism — play in shaping the relationship between Italians and the Roma. We predicted that the three traits are associated with avoidance tendencies, through the mediation of core intergroup emotions: higher anxiety and disgust, lower empathy and trust. A survey was performed. Participants — Italian University students and adults — were recruited in different Italian regions. A structural equation model was tested, in which psychopathy, Machiavellianism, and narcissism were the independent variables, emotions were the mediators, and approach and avoidance tendencies were the outcomes. Unexpectedly, psychopathy did not show any significant relationship with the mediators and the outcomes, and narcissism was positively related to approach responses. Machiavellianism, being positively related to anxiety and disgust, and negatively related to empathy and trust, was related to the propensity to avoid contact with the Roma. Practical implications of the study are discussed.

Key words: Dark Triad; Intergroup emotions; Intergroup disgust; Approach inclinations; Avoidance inclinations.

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Over the last years, great attention has been devoted to the factors that can lead to negative intergroup relations. Social psychologists have highlighted the role of cognitive biases (see Fiske & Taylor, 2013), social identity processes (e.g., Tajfel, 1981; see also Brown & Capozza, 2006), outgroup dehumanization (see Haslam, 2006; Leyens, Demoulin, Vaes, Gaunt, & Paladino, 2007). In addition, much research has explored the contribution of individual difference variables (see the concepts of authoritarianism, Altemeyer, 1996, and social dominance orientation, Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; the Big Five model, Costa & McCrae, 1992; the HEXACO model, Ashton, Lee, & Son, 2000).

Regarding personality traits, scholars have also analyzed the Dark Triad: psychopathy, Machiavellianism, and narcissism (see Jones & Paulhus, 2014; Paulhus & Williams, 2002). These personality variables, derived from clinical literature (except Machiavellianism), represent three interrelated constellations of undesirable characteristics that affect intergroup and interpersonal behaviors (see Hodson, Hogg, & MacInnis, 2009; see also the meta-analysis by Muris, Merckelbach, Otgaar, & Meijer, 2017). The subclinical trait of psychopathy defines an arrogant interpersonal style, characterized by moral disengagement, socioemotional deficits (callousness), and self-control deficits (impulsivity) (Jones & Paulhus, 2014; Muris et al., 2017). Impulsivity is the key feature that distinguishes this dimension from Machiavellianism (Jones & Paulhus, 2011, 2014; see also the meta-analysis by Vize, Lynam, Collison, & Miller, 2018, and the review by Furnham, Richards, & Paulhus, 2013).

Machiavellians are qualified by a strategic and calculating orientation; they build alliances and do their best to maintain a positive reputation (Jones & Paulhus, 2014). Key features of Machiavellianism are manipulateness and a behavioral style characterized by coldness, cynicism, and lack of principles (Furnham et al., 2013; Jones & Paulhus, 2014; Muris et al., 2017).

Finally, narcissism includes feelings of grandiosity, dominance, and superiority, that lead to aggressive behaviors when the ego is threatened (Jakobwitz & Egan, 2006; Jones & Paulhus, 2014; Paulhus & Williams, 2002; Raskin & Hall, 1979). Ego-identity goals drive narcissists' behavior, whereas instrumental goals drive Machiavellians' and psychopaths' behavior. Furthermore, unlike the other two profiles, narcissists are open to experiences, extroverted, and endowed with emotional intelligence (Muris et al., 2017; Vize et al., 2018).

The three members of the Dark Triad have in common absence of honesty-humility, difficulties in interpersonal relationships (desire for dominance, sense of entitlement), and the use of antisocial tactics (e.g., cheating, lying; Muris et al., 2017). In intergroup relationships, the three traits are associated with prejudice and racism (Hodson et al., 2009; Jonason, 2015). They are also related to intergroup emotions, namely, disgust (Hodson et al., 2013), outgroup threat perceptions (Hodson et al., 2009), and weak empathy (Wai & Tiliopoulos, 2012). In this paper, we investigate the association of the Dark Triad with intergroup empathy, anxiety, trust, and disgust toward the outgroup.

Intergroup empathy has been defined as the affective reaction to the emotions felt by outgroup members (W.G. Stephan & Finlay, 1999). Empathy is related to positive outgroup attitudes (see Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008; Vezzali, Hewstone, Capozza, Trifiletti, & Di Bernardo, 2017; Visintin, Voci, Pagotto, & Hewstone, 2017), prosocial behaviors (Litvack-Miller, McDougall, & Romney, 1997), reduced aggression (Nesdale, Milliner, Duffy, & Griffiths, 2009), and outgroup humanization (e.g., Capozza, Falvo, Favara, & Trifiletti, 2013).

Anxiety plays a crucial role in intergroup relations. This emotion refers to the feelings of unease people experience on occasions, in particular when they expect negative consequences from the interaction with outgroup members (W.G. Stephan, 2014). Anxiety yields detrimental effects. It may be, for instance, associated with depleted cognitive resources and, thus, with reliance on cognitive heuristics (Pohl, Erdfelder, Hilbig, Liebke, & Stahlberg, 2013) and stereotypes; it may curb the desire for contact with outgroup members (e.g., Levin, van Laar, & Sidanius, 2003; Swart, Hewstone, Christ, & Voci, 2011).

Regarding trust, it may be conceptualized as an emotion that increases our social vulnerability by expecting other people to act with competence and responsibility (see Kramer & Carnevale, 2001). Outgroup trust favors cooperation (Lewicki & Wiethoff, 2000) and the development of harmonious social relations (e.g., Capozza, Di Bernardo, & Falvo, 2017; Cehajic, Brown, & Castano, 2008; Tam, Hewstone, Kenworthy, & Cairns, 2009; Turner, West, & Christie, 2013).

Another crucial, yet little-studied, emotion is intergroup disgust. According to Hodson et al. (2013), this emotion includes negative affect, revulsion for outgroup members, fear of being contaminated, and a sense of ingroup superiority and purity. Intergroup disgust is associated with dehumanization (Hodson & Costello, 2007), prejudice, and negative attitudes toward the outgroups (see Choma, Haji, Hodson, & Hoffarth, 2016; Hodson et al., 2013). In recent years, emotions have been recognized as important predictors of intergroup attitudes and behaviors.

This paper aims to explore how the dimensions of the Dark Triad and emotions shape intergroup behavioral tendencies. Only a few studies have analyzed the association between the dark personalities and intergroup outcomes; the present study has the merit of disseminating findings on the Dark Triad among investigators of intergroup relations. It also has the merit of using approach and avoidance inclinations as

dependent variables, whereas in previous studies the Dark Triad was related to racism and prejudice (Hodson et al., 2009; Jonason, 2015).

We considered the relationship between Italians and the Roma — a highly stigmatized and marginalized ethnic minority, which usually arouses negative emotions and avoidance responses.¹ We chose the Roma as the outgroup because emotions and behaviors toward this group are likely to be associated with: the moral disengagement and socioemotional deficits characterizing psychopathy; the dominance and superiority feelings characterizing narcissism; the coldness and cynicism characterizing Machiavellianism. For other outgroups, for instance for people with disabilities, emotions and behavioral tendencies could be less correlated with the three traits. Participants were Italian students and adults.

To investigate the associations between personality, emotions, and behavioral tendencies, a mediation model was evaluated, in which the dark personalities were the predictors, two behavioral inclinations (approach and avoidance) were the outcome variables, and intergroup emotions (anxiety, empathy, trust, and disgust) were the mediators. We hypothesized a relationship between the dark traits and both emotions and behavioral tendencies. In particular, the three traits should be positively related to avoidance and negatively related to approach, through the mediation of higher negative emotions (anxiety and disgust) and weaker positive emotions (trust and empathy). To test the mediation model, *Mplus7.4* (Muthén & Muthén, 2012) was applied. Indirect effects were evaluated using bootstrapping and confidence interval (CI) procedures.

METHOD

Participants

The sample included 239 Italian participants, recruited in different Italian regions through an online survey (mean age = 26.43, *SD* = 9.61; 58 males). Participation was anonymous and voluntary. To access the questionnaire, respondents had to provide their informed consent through an electronic form.

Measures

The Short Dark Triad (SD3; Jones & Paulhus, 2014) was used to assess the dark traits. This measure includes 27 items (nine for each subscale), rated on a 7-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Examples of items are: “Most people can be manipulated” (Machiavellianism); “It’s true that I can be mean to others” (psychopathy); and “I have been compared to famous people” (narcissism). In the present study, the scale was translated from English to Italian by the authors, and then back-translated by a native English speaker. Reliability was sufficient for all subscales (alphas were .75, .62, and .69, for Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism, respectively). However, regarding psychopathy an item was excluded (“I have never gotten into trouble with the law”; *R*).

Intergroup emotions were assessed using measures derived from W.G Stephan and C.W. Stephan (1985; anxiety), and from Capozza, Falvo, et al. (2013), Capozza, Trifiletti, Vezzali, and Favara (2013) (empathy and trust). In particular, 12 items assessed anxiety (e.g., “If I were alone to interact with some Roma, I would feel anxious”); four items measured empathy (e.g., “When I think of the Roma, I understand how they feel”); four items measured trust (e.g., “I trust the Roma”). Alphas were .91, .88, .88 for

anxiety, empathy, and trust, respectively. Disgust was assessed with four items ($\alpha = .70$) adapted from Hodson et al. (2013), for instance: “I feel disgusted when a Roma invades my personal space.” Items measuring emotions were rated on a 7-point scale, anchored by *not at all* and *a lot*.

Finally, two avoidance and two approach items were employed, adapted from Tam et al. (2009). The items assessing avoidance tendencies were: “I wish to keep the Roma at a distance,” and “I wish to avoid the Roma” ($r = .78, p < .001$), whereas the items assessing approach were: “I wish to spend time with the Roma,” and “I wish to talk to the Roma” ($r = .67, p < .001$). Items measuring behavioral tendencies were rated on a 7-point scale, anchored by *not at all* and *a lot*.

Data Analyses

The hypothesized relations between constructs were tested using a structural equation model with latent variables (Figure 1). For the exogenous and mediating variables, constructs were measured using two parcels (the random assignment method was applied; Little, Cunningham, Shahar, & Widaman, 2002), whereas for the outcome variables, the two respective items were used as indicators. The structural equation model was evaluated applying maximum likelihood (ML) as estimator. All the direct paths — from traits to emotions, from emotions to behavioral inclinations, from traits to behavioral inclinations — were estimated, and the significance of indirect effects was evaluated employing bootstrapping procedures (5,000 resamples) and the 95% bias-corrected confidence interval. To assess the adequacy of the overall structural model, several indices were used: χ^2 , root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), comparative fit index (CFI), and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). The adequacy of a model is supported by a nonsignificant χ^2 , RMSEA values less than .06 (.06 to .08, for a reasonable fit), CFI values close to .95 (.90 to .95, for a reasonable fit), and SRMR less than .08 (see Marsh, Hau, & Wen, 2004).

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics for all the variables used are reported in Table 1. The evaluation of the structural equation model showed an excellent fit to data: $\chi^2(99) = 118.81, p = .08$; RMSEA = .03; CFI = .99; SRMR = .03.² As shown in Figure 1, intergroup emotions were related to the criterion variables in the expected directions. Anxiety and disgust were positively associated with avoidance inclinations; conversely, trust and empathy were positively related to approach inclinations (correlations between the indicators of the nine constructs are reported in the Appendix).

The relationships of dark personalities with behavioral tendencies were all mediated by emotions. To test the significance of indirect effects, bootstrap was applied, and the 95% bias-corrected confidence interval was used. All the indirect paths displayed in Figure 1 were reliable (Table 2), except for Machiavellianism → anxiety → approach: for this path, in fact, the 95% confidence interval included zero.

From Figure 1 it appears that psychopathy did not show unique significant relationships either with emotions or approach/avoidance propensities. Contrary to hypotheses, narcissism was negatively related to anxiety and, thus, positively related to approach inclinations and negatively related to avoidance inclinations. Machiavellianism showed the richest array of relationships, being associated with all emotions and, through emotions, with the desire to stay away from the Roma (all data are available from the first author, upon request).

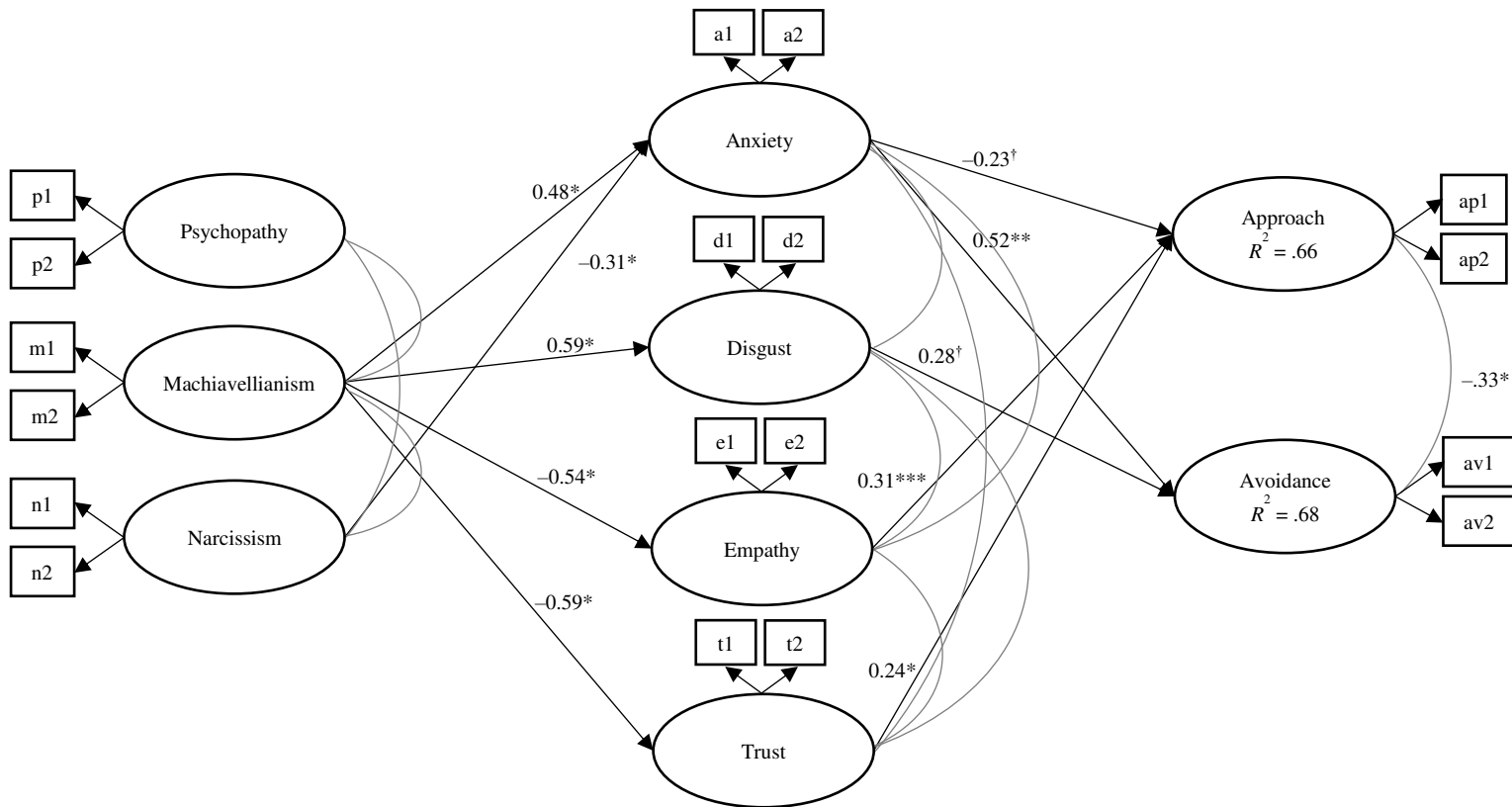


FIGURE 1

Mediation effects of intergroup emotions in the relationship between the Dark Triad personalities and approach/avoidance behavioral inclinations toward the Roma ($N = 239$). Only significant regression coefficients (unstandardized coefficients) are reported.

Curved paths denote correlations between variables: Correlations between exogenous variables range from .30 to .73 ($p < .001$); correlations between mediators range from $-.69$ (anxiety and trust) to $.57$ (anxiety and disgust) ($p < .001$).

† $p < .07$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

TABLE 1
 Descriptive statistics

	Mean	SD
Psychopathy	2.82	0.82
Machiavellianism	3.61	0.99
Narcissism	3.49	0.86
Intergroup anxiety	4.84	1.05
Intergroup disgust	3.01	1.30
Intergroup empathy	2.99	1.30
Intergroup trust	2.96	1.25
Approach tendencies	2.73	1.37
Avoidance tendencies	4.45	1.71

TABLE 2
 Significant indirect effects of the dark traits on behavioral tendencies

Indirect effects	95% CI	Point estimate
Narcissism → Intergroup anxiety → Approach behavioral tendencies	[0.001, 0.218]	0.07
Narcissism → Intergroup anxiety → Avoidance behavioral tendencies	[-0.401, -0.030]	-0.16
Machiavellianism → Intergroup empathy → Approach behavioral tendencies	[-0.456, -0.056]	-0.17
Machiavellianism → Intergroup trust → Approach behavioral tendencies	[-0.416, -0.019]	-0.14
Machiavellianism → Intergroup anxiety → Avoidance behavioral tendencies	[0.083, 0.614]	0.25
Machiavellianism → Intergroup disgust → Avoidance behavioral tendencies	[0.021, 0.457]	0.16

Note. CI = 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals.

DISCUSSION

This work aimed to explore the relations of Dark Triad traits with emotions and approach/avoidance propensities toward the Roma. Findings showed that dark traits shape intergroup relations, and their links with approach/avoidance dispositions are mediated by affective responses. The trait with the richest array of relations was Machiavellianism. Findings indicate that Machiavellianism is associated with lower trust and empathy toward outgroup members, and higher anxiety and disgust. These emotions are coherent with the strategic-calculating orientation of Machiavellians, and lead them to stronger avoidance and weaker approach tendencies toward this outgroup. Regarding narcissism, findings evidence that this trait, including vanity, egocentric admiration of one's qualities, and openness to experiences (see Muris et al., 2017), is related to reduced anxiety and the proclivity to approach the outgroup, even if perceived as dangerous. Narcissism may lead to seek approval regardless of the group providing it. For psychopathy, we observed that this trait, although featuring impulsiveness, moral disengagement, aggression, and low consciousness (see Muris et al., 2017; Vize et al., 2018), is not related to emotions and behavioral tendencies toward the Roma. This finding can depend on limitations of the present study; in fact, in our investigation, we did not consider a core emotion — anger — and a core behavioral tendency — attack. Ac-

tually, psychopathy could be related to aggression toward the Roma through the mediation of anger. Future research should consider anger and aggression, and test their relationship.

Future research should also examine other groups, besides the Roma. Probably, disgust is the only emotion the three personalities feel, when people with intellectual disabilities are the outgroup; probably, Machiavellians, but not narcissists, feel anxiety, when the rich are the outgroup. The stereotype content model (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002) could be the theoretical framework for this analysis. A further limitation of the current study is its cross-sectional design, which does not allow an ordering of causal variables. In future studies, the hypothesized model should be tested using a three-wave longitudinal design.

Our findings have practical implications. They show a strategy that can be followed to undermine Machiavellians' tendency to avoid contact with the Roma. Empathy could be induced by living in caring and supporting social contexts (see the effects of secure attachment activation on compassion and empathy; Mikulincer et al., 2001, 2003; Mikulincer, Shaver, Gillath, & Nitzberg, 2005). In caring social contexts, even Machiavellians can become more empathetic and trustful.

With this work, we have shown that the Dark Triad is associated with intergroup emotions. Thus, the three socially aversive personalities' inclination to racism and prejudice (see Hodson et al., 2009; Jonason, 2015) can be attenuated by affecting emotions through different social tactics, such as, favoring positive intergroup contact.

NOTES

1. In Italy, the Roma represent about the 0.25% (approximately 180,000 people) of the total population. They generally live in the so-called "nomad camps," which are located in peripheral areas of cities (Vilano, Fontanella, Fontanella, & Di Donato, 2017).
2. To test whether the nine latent variables (Figure 1) were distinct constructs, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was applied. A nine-factor solution was tested. Fit indices — that showed an excellent fit — were the same for CFA and the structural model, because of the equivalence of the two models (for the concept of equivalence, see Tomarken & Waller, 2003). Regarding correlations between latent constructs, they were all significantly lower than 1: indeed, for each correlation, the 95% confidence interval, obtained considering two standard errors above and two standard errors below the observed correlation, never included 1. This finding supports the distinction between the nine constructs.

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APPENDIX
Standard deviations and zero-order correlations between indicators of the nine latent variables ($N = 239$)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
1. Psychopathy 1	-																		
2. Psychopathy 2	.50***	-																	
3. Machiavellianism 1	.41***	.47***	-																
4. Machiavellianism 2	.32***	.45***	.65***	-															
5. Narcissism 1	.26***	.12	.17**	.10	-														
6. Narcissism 2	.34***	.21***	.28***	.17**	.60***	-													
7. Anxiety 1	.12	.13*	.23***	.25***	-.03	-.08	-												
8. Anxiety 2	.09	.08	.25***	.25***	-.10	-.09	.83***	-											
9. Disgust 1	.25***	.22***	.33***	.34***	.16*	.23***	.45***	.48***	-										
10. Disgust 2	.26***	.22***	.27***	.26***	.07	.16**	.34***	.38***	.57***	-									
11. Empathy 1	-.09	-.09	-.22***	-.20***	-.08	-.06	-.37***	-.35***	-.39***	-.20***	-								
12. Empathy 2	-.06	-.07	-.17**	-.23***	-.06	-.09	-.38***	-.36***	-.38***	-.18**	.84***	-							
13. Trust 1	-.19**	-.25***	-.32***	-.34***	-.09	-.09	-.61***	-.62***	-.59***	-.37***	.49***	.52***	-						
14. Trust 2	-.12	-.17**	-.29***	-.29***	-.04	-.08	-.62***	-.63***	-.57***	-.37***	.50***	.55***	.88***	-					
15. Approach 1	-.04	-.05	-.16*	-.14*	-.02	.01	-.44***	-.42***	-.42***	-.36***	.46***	.45***	.60***	.56***	-				
16. Approach 2	-.13*	-.10	-.21***	-.22***	-.04	.00	-.54***	-.52***	-.47***	-.33***	.55***	.54***	.58***	.56***	.67***	-			
17. Avoidance 1	.18**	.20**	.35***	.35***	.12	.12	.56***	.56***	.53***	.33***	-.44***	-.42***	-.58***	-.59***	-.41***	-.57***	-		
18. Avoidance 2	.20**	.24***	.39***	.37***	.04	.08	.57***	.58***	.56***	.44***	-.45***	-.44***	-.62***	-.62***	-.48***	-.60***	.78***	-	
SD	0.93	0.93	1.06	1.11	0.95	0.97	1.03	1.15	1.56	1.35	1.38	1.32	1.30	1.27	1.43	1.57	1.84	1.79	

* $p < .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.