



# The Dark Triad and three types of jealousy: Its' relations among heterosexuals and homosexuals involved in a romantic relationship



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## ABSTRACT

The current study examined the relations between the three Dark Triad (DT) traits and three types of jealousy, among both heterosexual and homosexual men and women involved in a romantic relationship ( $n = 439$ ). It was hypothesized that the three DT traits would be related positively to those types of jealousy that have the potential to become delusional, that is anxious and preventive jealousy, but not to the relatively 'healthy' type of jealousy, that is reactive jealousy. In addition, differences were examined between men and women, and between homosexuals and heterosexuals with regard to the DT traits, the three types of jealousy, and the relationships between these variables. Results largely confirmed the hypothesis. In addition, moderation analyses showed that the relationships between the three DT traits and the three types of jealousy were not moderated by participant sex or sexual orientation. The current study's findings may deepen our understanding of the role of the DT in the mating psychology of both heterosexuals and homosexuals.

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## 1. Introduction

Previous studies have found consistent relations between the Dark Triad (DT; narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism) and short-term mating preferences (e.g., Jonason, Li, & Buss, 2010; Jonason, Luevano, & Adams, 2012). According to Jonason, Lyons, and Blanchard (2015) the DT traits - characterized by features such as entitlement, superiority, dominance (i.e., narcissism), glib social charm, deceit, manipulativeness (i.e., Machiavellianism), and erratic, antisocial behavior, impulsivity, and interpersonal antagonism (i.e., psychopathy) - may facilitate the access to short-term mates. In addition to being related to mating preferences, the DT traits have also been found to be related to the way individuals respond to (potential) relationship threats, once they are involved in an intimate relationship (Brewer, Hunt, James, & Abell, 2015; Goncalves & Campbell, 2014; Jonason et al., 2010; Rasmussen & Boon, 2014). Brewer et al. (2015), for instance, found that as women reported higher levels of psychopathy, they were more likely to take revenge (by, for instance, shouting and spreading rumors) in response to a hypothetical scenario describing a partner's infidelity. Likewise, Goncalves and Campbell (2014) found that the DT traits

were related to the use of specific rival derogation tactics. Whereas, for instance, individuals scoring higher (versus lower) on psychopathy reported a greater likelihood to attempt to damage the reputation of mate competitors, individuals scoring higher (versus lower) on narcissism indicated being more likely to attempt to outshine mating rivals.

### 1.1. Jealousy and the Dark Triad

One of the most common responses to a (potential) relationship threat is jealousy. Jealousy can be defined as the response to a threat or the actual loss of a romantic relationship as a result of an actual, or imagined, rival for one's partner's attention (e.g., Dijkstra & Buunk, 1998). Jealousy may be strengthened by the loss of self-esteem that may accompany the (potential) loss of a partner (DeSteno, Valdesolo, & Bartlett, 2006). Although the relations between the DT and responses to (potential) relationship threats have been examined in terms of mate retention tactics (Goncalves & Campbell, 2014) and intentions of revenge in response to a partner's infidelity (Brewer et al., 2015), the relations between the DT and jealousy have not yet been systematically examined. Massar, Winters, Lenz and Jonason (2017) studied the relations between jealousy and psychopathy, finding that secondary psychopathy (characterized by impulsivity and risky, antisocial behavior; primary psychopathy is characterized by callousness and manipulativeness), predicted the experience of jealousy. Research on the relations between jealousy and the other two DT traits - Machiavellianism and narcissism - is still lacking. It is, however, highly likely that all three

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DT traits are related to the experience of jealousy. For instance, the threat of losing a partner due to a rival's attention may especially affect those high in narcissism, who, more than others, may perceive the relationship threat as a threat to their own ego. Likewise, individuals high in Machiavellianism may experience more jealousy because they themselves tend to be more deceitful, and may project these deceitful intentions onto their partner, believing that he or she is relatively likely to be unfaithful. However, the exact relations between the DT and jealousy may depend on the type of jealousy that individuals experience. The present study therefore examines the relations between the DT traits and three types of jealousy.

### 1.2. Three types of jealousy

Jealousy is best conceptualized as a multidimensional phenomenon (e.g., Sharpsteen, 1991). That is, besides being an emotional response, jealousy also involves thoughts and coping behaviors (e.g., Pfeiffer & Wong, 1989; Sharpsteen, 1991). Consistent with this definition, Buunk (1997) distinguished between three qualitatively different types of jealousy: reactive, anxious and preventive jealousy. Reactive jealousy is the degree of upset that individuals experience when their mate is actually being emotionally or sexually unfaithful, for instance, when one's partner is flirting or having sex with someone else. Individuals may also experience preventive jealousy. Preventive jealousy – sometimes also referred to as possessive jealousy (e.g., Barelds & Dijkstra, 2007) – refers to an individual's tendency to prevent contact of their partner with a third person. For example, preventively jealous individuals may find it unacceptable that their mate has opposite-sex friends. As an extreme consequence, preventive jealousy may even lead to violence and stalking (Daly, Wilson, & Weghorst, 1982). Finally, anxious jealousy refers to a process in which the individual ruminates about the possibility of a mate's infidelity, and experiences feelings of anxiety, suspicion, worry, distrust, and upset (Buunk, 1997).

Central to Buunk's (1997) typology is the assumption that the three different types of jealousy differ in the extent to which they are potentially problematic or 'unhealthy' (Barelds & Dijkstra, 2006, 2007; Buunk, 1997). Because reactive jealousy constitutes a direct response to an actual relationship threat (for instance, one's partner is having sex with someone else), reactive jealousy can be considered relatively 'healthy' or 'rational'. Responding with jealousy when one's partner has been unfaithful may even be considered a sign of love and/or commitment. This line of reasoning is confirmed by Barelds and Dijkstra (2007) who found a positive relation between reactive jealousy and relationship quality, but not between the other types of jealousy and relationship quality. In contrast, both preventive and anxious jealousy may become problematic and negatively affect the intimate relationship. The most important reason for this is that both preventive and anxious jealousy may be triggered in response to an *imagined* rather than a real rival, and therefore may become delusional in nature (Barelds & Dijkstra, 2006, 2007; Buunk, 1997). Because of the potential delusional nature of anxious and preventive jealousy, we hypothesized these two types of jealousy – but not reactive jealousy – to be related to the three DT traits. There may be, at least, two ways in which the DT may fuel the delusional aspects of anxious and preventive jealousy. First, in the experience of jealousy, feelings and preferences of the self may become projected on the partner (e.g., Ellis, 1996). Since individuals reporting high DT scores, in general, have a stronger interest in short-term mating and are more likely to have been unfaithful themselves (Brewer et al., 2015; Jones & Weiser, 2014), they may believe that their mates are relatively likely to seek extra-dyadic sex as well, even if this is not the case. Second, several studies have shown some indications of positive assortative mating (the tendency to seek a mate that resembles the self) with regard to the DT (e.g., Jonason, Valentine, Li, & Harbeson, 2011; Lyons & Blanchard, 2016; Smith et al., 2014). Individuals with high scores on the DT traits may therefore have relatively similar mates, who, as a consequence, are also relatively interested in extra-dyadic sex. As a result, individuals

with high scores on the DT traits may be more vigilant about their partner's fidelity in general, and become relatively upset in response to only small or even illusory signs of infidelity.

### 1.3. Sex and sexual orientation

How the DT and jealousy are related may not only depend on the type of jealousy that individuals experience, but also on their sex and sexual orientation. Both sex and sexual orientation have been found to be related to jealousy in general and, more specifically, to the three types of jealousy distinguished by Buunk (1997). For instance, compared to their heterosexual counterparts, both homosexual men and women have been found to respond with less reactive jealousy to a partner's unfaithfulness, such as kissing with someone else (Barelds & Dijkstra, 2006). In a similar vein, in general, heterosexual women tend to report higher levels of anxious and reactive jealousy than heterosexual men (e.g., Barelds & Dijkstra, 2007). Regarding the DT, studies have also shown the sexes to differ, with men generally reporting higher DT scores than women (e.g., Jonason, Lyons, Bethell, & Ross, 2013). Although studies that have compared heterosexuals and homosexuals with regard to the DT are lacking, it may well be that, also with regard to the DT, homosexuals and heterosexuals differ. For instance, in studying the relations between the DT and the hormone testosterone, Pfattheicher (2016) found a positive relationship between narcissism and testosterone, a hormone that, in some studies (but not in others), has also been found to be related to homosexuality in men (e.g., Neave, Menaged, & Weightman, 1999; see also Garttrell, Loriaux, & Chase, 1977). In other words, there may be some biological markers that are related to both sexual orientation and one or more of the three DT traits, and that may cause the DT and sexual orientation to be related. Because of the differences between men and women and homosexuals and heterosexuals in the DT and/or jealousy, the present study also explored whether the relations between the DT and the three types of jealousy differed as a function of sex and sexual orientation.

### 1.4. The present study

The present study examines the relations between the DT and three types of jealousy (reactive, anxious, and preventive) in a sample of heterosexual and homosexual individuals involved in a romantic relationship. The present study examined individuals involved in romantic relationship only (in contrast to single individuals) since for these individuals the break-up of a romantic relationship is a more realistic concern than for individuals without a partner, and therefore is likely to lead to more realistic results. In addition to examining the relations between the DT and the three types of jealousy, the effects of sex and sexual orientation on the DT and jealousy will be examined, as well as moderator effects of sex and sexual orientation with regard to the relations between the DT and jealousy.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants and procedure

A total of 726 participants completed the present study's online survey. Of these participants, 436 were heterosexual, 204 homosexual, and 86 indicated being bisexual. The latter group was removed from the sample, leaving 640 participants. Of these 640 participants, 201 indicated that they were currently single. These participants were also removed, leaving a final sample for the analyses of 439 participants, of which 140 were married, 172 were cohabiting, and 127 were involved in a serious relationship, but were not married or cohabiting. Mean relationship length was 10.5 years ( $SD = 11.3$ , ranging from less than one year to 40 years). The final sample consists of 77 heterosexual males, 235 heterosexual females, 42 homosexual males, and 85

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