

## Searching for the origins of the ‘dark traits’ of humanity

We all know people who consistently display ethically, morally, and socially questionable behavior in everyday life. Personality psychologists refer to these characteristics among a subclinical population as “dark traits.” An understanding of dark traits have become increasingly popular not only in psychology, but also in criminology and [behavioral economics](#).

Even though psychologists have studied various dark traits, it has become increasingly clear that these dark traits are related to each other. This raises the question: Is there a unifying theme among dark traits?

Morten Moshagen and his colleagues proposed that a D-factor exists, which they define as the basic tendency to maximize one’s own utility at the expense of others, accompanied by beliefs that serve as justifications for one’s malevolent behaviors.

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[T]hose scoring high on the D-factor will not be motivated to increase the utility of others (helping others in need) without benefiting themselves, and will not derive utility for themselves from the utility of others (e.g., being happy for the success of others).

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[T]hey found that all of the dark traits were substantially positively related to each other (what Spearman referred to as a “[positive manifold](#)”)– although some traits were more strongly correlated with each other than others. The strongest correlations were found among measures of Egoism, Machiavellianism, Moral Disengagement, Psychopathy, Sadism, and Spitefulness.

**Read full, original post:** [The Dark Core of Personality](#)