

## The Dark Triad's Moral Labyrinth: Differentiating Cognitive Processes Involved in Machiavellianism and Psychopathy

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**Abstract :** With the intention of identifying cognitive processes uniquely involved in the dark triad personality traits of psychopathy, Machiavellianism, and narcissism, this study aimed to determine further potential differences and parameters of individual traits by explaining a statistically significant amount of variance between the constructs of manipulateness, impulsiveness, grit, and need for cognition within the dark triad. Applying a cross-sectional design, N = 96 participants self-reported using the MACH-IV, SRP-III, NFC-S, and Grit Scale for Perseverance and Passion for Long-Term Goals. Hierarchical regression analyses showed that only manipulateness predicted Machiavellianism, whereas manipulateness and impulsiveness were found to have predictive qualities for psychopathy. Overall, these results found areas of discrepancy and overlap between manipulation and impulsivity regarding psychopathy and Machiavellianism. Additionally, this study serves to preliminarily eliminate the Need for Cognition and grit as predictive variables for Machiavellianism and psychopathy.

**Keywords :** Machiavellianism, psychopathy, manipulation, impulsiveness, need for cognition, grit, dark triad

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