

PERSONALITY CORRELATES OF MACHIAVELLIANISM: IV. MACHIAVELLIANISM AND PSYCHOPATHOLOGY¹

NICHOLAS F. SKINNER
University of Western Ontario

The few studies which have tested Christie's (1970) contention that "there should be little or no relationship between Machiavellian orientations and measures of psychopathology" (p. 42) have been characterized by contradictory findings and procedural flaws. In the present investigation, High Machs and Non -Machs (as determined by the Mach V) did not differ significantly in their scores on Neuroticism and Psychoticism (Eysenck Personality Inventory), Depression (IPAT Depression Scale) Occupational, Health, Home, Social and Emotional Adjustment (Bell Adjustment Inventory), or any of the substantive scales of the MMPI, thereby providing support for the hypothesis that the Machiavellian is a psychologically stable individual.

Although Christie and Geis' (1970) pioneering monograph on Machiavellianism prompted numerous investigations of the relationship between socially manipulative behavior and normal personality (cf. Christie, 1970; Hanson, 1978; Skinner, 1981; Skinner, Giokas, & Hornstein, 1976), contended "that there should be little or no relationship between Machiavellian orientations and measures of psychopathology" (p. 42). Strangely, this conclusion was based on a study of previously screened Peace Corps candidates, of whom Christie said, "it would be remarkable if, given such a careful going over, such a homogeneous population would show any significant correlations of MMPI scores with any other measure. Obviously we cannot generalize from such a sample to any unscreened populations" (p. 45). The unfortunate effect of such paradoxical assertions was to discourage research into the abnormal personality correlates of Machiavellianism.

The issue became further confused by the puzzling findings and questionable utility of the few studies which were carried out. For example, Gates (1975), having labelled as Machiavellian any subjects registering above the mean on the Mach V (and thus inevitably contaminating the high Mach group with intermediate scores; Skinner, 1982), reported that Machiavellians judged themselves to be above average not only on self-esteem and self-satisfaction but also self-criticism and pathological disturbance. Similar putative contradictions existed in the research of Di Marco and Wilhelm (1973), and Smith and Griffith (1978), who found Mach IV scores to be positively related to self-actualization and psychopathy, respectively. In the latter instances, interpretation of such paradoxical results was doubly difficult because of the susceptibility of the Mach IV to the facade effect (Cronbach, 1970) – as was also the case in an investigation by Christie and Budnitzky (1957), in which initial correlations between Machiavellianism and anxiety were shown later to be a product of the Mach IV's inherent "problem of social desirability" (Christie, 1970: 45).

¹This study was supported by the King's College Research Grants Committee.

In short, Christie's (1970) original expectation that Machiavellianism should be uncorrelated with psychopathology was not satisfactorily tested, either by Christie himself or in subsequent inquiries. Thus, the present study tested the hypothesis that the Machiavellian is a psychologically healthy individual.

METHOD

The Mach V was administered to 346 male university undergraduate volunteers (mean age 19.8 yr, range 17.8-28.7 yr). Thirty-two subjects who obtained Mach V scores more than one standard deviation above the total group mean ($mean = 99.24$, $SD = 10.02$) were designated as High Machs ($mean = 115.66$, $SD = 7.47$). Their self-reports were compared with those of the remaining 314 Non-Machs ($mean = 97.18$, $SD = 9.36$) on four representative psychopathology assessment instruments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

No significant differences (two-tailed tests) were found between High Machs and Non-Machs on: (1) Neuroticism and Psychoticism (Eysenck Personality Inventory); (2) Depression (IPAT Depression Scale); (3) Occupational, Health, Home, Social, and Emotional Adjustment (Bell Adjustment Inventory); or (4) any of the substantive scales of the MMPI.² This lack of abnormal personality manifestations in the High Machs validates what for Christie (1970) had been only an heuristic "assumption" (p. 44), and calls into question "the pejorative connotations of the Machiavellian personality style" (Gates, 1975; 3038).

However, in that (a) only male subjects were tested in this and Gates' (1975) study, and (b) pilot data from female subjects indicates small but significant negative correlations between Machiavellianism and both the Social and Emotional Adjustment scales of the Bell Adjustment Inventory, it remains for future research to determine if the present results can be generalized to both sexes and across an even broader spectrum of psychopathological indices.

REFERENCES

- Christie, R. (1970). Relationships between Machiavellianism and measures of ability, opinion and personality. In R. Christie and F. Geis (Eds.), *Studies in Machiavellianism*: 35-52. Academic Press, New York.
- Christie, R., Budnitzky, S. (1951). A short forced-choice anxiety scale. *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, **21**: 501.
- Christie, R., Geis, F. (Eds.) (1970). *Studies in Machiavellianism*, Academic Press, New York.
- Cronbach, L. J. (1970). *Essentials of Psychological Testing*, 3rd ed. Harper & Row, New York.
- Di Marco, N. J., Wilhelm, P. (1973). Relationship between self-actualization and manipulation. *Psychological Reports*, **33**: 633-4.
- Gates, S. L. (1975). Some self-concept characteristics of the male Machiavellian personality style. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, **36** (6-B): 3038.
- Hanson, D. J. (1978). Machiavellianism as a variable in research: A bibliography. *JSAS Catalog of Selected Documents in Psychology*, **8**: 11 (Ms. No. 1643).
- Skinner, N. F. (1981). Personality correlates of Machiavellianism: II. Machiavellianism and achievement motivation in business. *Social Behavior and Personality*, **9**:155-7.

²Using a one-tailed test, High Machs obtained a significantly higher score than Non-Machs on the Psychopathic Deviance (Pd) scale of the MMPI ($t = 1.92$, $df = 344$, $p < 0.05$). This finding is consistent with the correlation reported by Smith and Griffith (1978), using the Mach IV.

- Skinner, N. F. (1982). Personality correlates of Machiavellianism III. A simulation procedure for identifying High Machs. *Social Behavior and Personality*, **10**: 197-199
- Skinner, N. F., Giokas, J. A., Hornstein, H. A. (1976). Personality correlates of Machiavellianism: 1. Consensual validation. *Social Behavior and Personality*, **4**: 273-6.
- Smith, R. J., Griffith. J. E. (1978). Psychopathy, the Machiavellian, and anomie. *Psychological Reports*, **42**: 258.

N. F. SKINNER,
Department of Psychology,
King's College,
266 Epworth Ave.,
London, Ontario,
Canada N6A 2M3.

Reprints of this paper are available from Dr. Skinner.