

PERSONALITY CORRELATES OF MACHIAVELLIANISM: III. A SIMULATION PROCEDURE FOR IDENTIFYING HIGH MACHS¹

NICHOLAS F. SKINNER
University of Western Ontario

The study demonstrated that the non-Machiavellian layman, given a detailed description of the high Mach, can consistently produce a valid representation of highly manipulative interpersonal behavior under instructions to respond to the Mach V "as a Machiavellian would". Simulation is thus shown to be a viable alternative to the median-split and extensive-testing methods for obtaining subjects for investigations of Machiavellianism, for reasons of veridicality and economy, respectively.

Despite the increasing empirical focus on Machiavellianism during the past two decades (*cf.* the 183-item bibliography by Hanson, 1978), procedures for the identification of highly Machiavellian subjects have been of questionable utility. Following the lead set in Christie and Geis' (1970) definitive compendium, most subsequent studies have employed the "median-split", a dubious technique by which all subjects scoring above the median on the Mach IV or Mach V are automatically categorized as "high Machs". The inevitable result has been that, in any particular study, it is difficult to determine to what extent the high Mach group mean was attenuated by intermediate scores. On the other hand, given the alternative of having to use the "extensive testing" method - because of the demonstrated "low incidence of high Machs in the . . . population" (Skinner *et al.*, 1976: 275) - previous researchers may have regarded the inclusion of mid-range scores in high Mach groups as a practical (albeit unwelcome) necessity.

The student of Machiavellianism has thus been placed in the unproductive position of either having to (a) test a readily accessible group, knowing from the outset that its desired level of Machiavellianism will be artifactually depressed, or (b) expend prohibitive amounts of time and materials in identifying an acceptably large number of subjects with actual high Mach scores. The research described here was intended to resolve this dilemma by showing that the non-Machiavellian layman can consistently give a *valid* representation of highly manipulative interpersonal behavior.

METHOD

In Phase One, 148 psychology undergraduates (96 females, 52 males, mean age 20.0yr, range 17-31 yr) completed the Mach V according to standard instructions. On the basis of their scores, subjects were then divided into two groups: (1) Honest Machs ($n = 13$), *i.e.*, individuals with Mach V scores more than one standard deviation above the total group mean; and (2) Honest Non-Machs ($n = 135$), *i.e.*, the remaining subjects. In Phase Two, the Honest Non-Machs

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

first familiarized themselves with a written description of the characteristic attitudes and behaviors of the high Mach (adapted from Christie, 1970a: 3-4). They were then instructed to complete the Mach V a second time "the way a 'Machiavellian' would if he or she were filling in the same questionnaire as honestly as possible". Under such simulation conditions, these subjects were referred to as Fake Machs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data are presented in Table 1. As expected, the Phase One means for all subjects responding under standard instructions ($mean = 98.89$; $SD = 9.96$), and for Honest Non-Machs ($mean = 97.35$; $SD = 10.43$), were very close both to the Mach V theoretical neutral point of 100 (Christie, 1970b), and the normative score of 9736 ($SD = 10.61$) gathered by Christie (1970b) from 1596 female and male Caucasian students. More substantially, the Phase One score for the Honest Machs ($mean = 114.85$, $SD = 5.03$), and the Phase Two mean for the Fake Machs ($mean = 114.44$, $SD = 8.77$), were not only virtually identical with each other, but also significantly higher than the mean Phase One score for the Honest Non-Machs ($t = 2.15$, $df = 146$, $p < 0.05$, and $t = 2.14$, $df = 134$, $p < 0.05$, respectively).

TABLE 1: MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR ALL GROUPS

Phase Group	Phase One		Phase Two	
	All Subjects ($n = 148$)	Honest Machs ($n = 13$)	Honest Non-Machs ($n = 135$)	Fake Machs ($n = 135$)
Mean	98.89	114.85	97.35	114.44
SD	9.96	5.03	8.43	8.77

Both earlier attempts to assess the utility of the simulation method for identifying high Machs yielded equivocal results. Specifically, while Marks and Lindsay (1966) found an increase in scores when each subject completed the Mach V twice, first honestly and then as "if he were a Machiavellian" (p. 230), they did not report whether the difference in Mach V scores was significant, or if the faked responses were consistent with those of true Machiavellians. Similarly, in the first study in the current series (Skinner *et al.*, 1976), the significantly higher scores of Fake Machiavellians (compared with those of Control subjects responding honestly) on the Mach V and a variety of personality questionnaires allowed only the tentative conclusion that the faking results were "*Logically congruent* [author's italics] with previous findings about actual high Machs" (p. 275).

The results summarized in Table 1, while confirming prior indications that scores do increase under instructions to complete the Mach V from a Machiavellian perspective, go beyond past research by demonstrating that faked response patterns are not only (a) *significantly* higher than honest scores of non-Machiavellians, but (b) *actually congruent* with those of true high Machs. Thus, the present findings point up the advantages of the simulation procedure for obtaining participants for studies of Machiavellianism, namely, economy, which is precluded by the large number of individuals necessitated by the extensive testing method, and, more importantly, veridically, which is diminished in the contaminated (by mid-range scores) subject pools obtained using the median-split technique.

REFERENCES

- Christie, R., 1970a; Why Machiavelli? In R. Christie and F Geis (Eds.), *Studies in Machiavellianism*: 1-9. Academic Press, New York.

- _____ 1970b; Scale construction. In R. Christie and F. Geis (Eds.), *Studies in Machiavellianism*: 10-34. Academic Press, New York.
- Christie, R.; Geis, F. (Eds.), 1970: *Studies in Machiavellianism*. Academic Press, New York.
- Hanson, D. J., 1978: Machiavellianism as a variable in research: A bibliography. *JSAS Catalog of Selected Documents in Psychology*, 8: 11 (Ms. No. 1643).
- Marks, E.; Lindsay, C. A., 1966: Machiavellian attitudes: Some measurements and behavioural considerations. *Sociometry*, 29: 228-36.
- Skinner, N. F.; Giokas, J. A.; Hornstein, H. A., 1976: Personality correlates of Machiavellianism: I. Consensual validation. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 4: 273-6.

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

Reprints of this paper are available from Dr Skinner.