

PERSONALITY CORRELATES OF MACHIAVELLIANISM: VI. MACHIAVELLIANISM AND THE PSYCHOPATH

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Previous researchers have not demonstrated the hypothesized link between machiavellianism (interpersonally manipulative behavior) and psychopathy. In this research, high Machs obtained significantly higher psychopathy scores than low Machs, and Mach V totals for primary psychopaths were significantly greater than those of secondary psychopaths. Both experiments suggest a relationship between Machiavellianism and primary psychopathy.

Keywords: personality correlates, Machiavellianism, psychopathy.

In their seminal work, *Studies in Machiavellianism*, Christie and Geis (1970) suggested that the Machiavellian individual may be most accurately described as a social manipulator – one who uses guile, deception, and opportunism in interpersonal affairs. He or she is generally unconcerned with conventional morality, has low ideological commitment, and shows a lack of emotional involvement with others (preferring instead to use others as means towards the attainment of his or her own ends).

Because of numerous demonstrations that the Machiavellian is psychologically stable (e.g., Christie & Budnitzky, 1957; Di Marco & Wilhelm, 1973; Skinner, 1982a), students of abnormal behavior have been intrigued by the apparent affinity between Machiavellianism and psychopathic dysfunction. Thus, the identification of the Machiavellian as “someone who...manipulates others for his own purposes” (Christie, 1970a, p. 1), and the psychopath as an individual strongly characterized by interpersonal manipulation (e.g., Cleckley, 1955; Coleman, 1964), prompted Saruk’s (1975) conclusion that “the high Mach syndrome carries with it all the...symptomatology of the psychopath” (p. 12), and Smith’s (1978) assertion that “there seems hardly a serious contradiction between the two profiles” (p. 92).

Such certitude notwithstanding, with the exception of a marginally significant correlation noted by Smith and Griffith (1978), researchers have *not* demonstrated a link between Machiavellianism and psychopathy. During the intervening decade and a half, a number of investigators addressed the question of whether Machiavellianism is merely a utilitarian way of behaving, or, in fact, a substantive dimension of personality. This debate was definitively resolved by Kline and Cooper’s (1983) demonstration that (i) Christie and Geis’ Machiavellianism scale are virtually independent of the best known factorial dimensions of personality, and (ii) measures

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of Machiavellianism are required in any comprehensive description of personality. Grebwald (1967) concluded that psychopaths are inadequate manipulators, while Christie (1970b) was unable to show a connection between Mach scores and clinical scale measures of psychopathy. Similarly, Saruk (1975) reported that incarcerated psychopathic subjects did not achieve high Mach scores, and Widom (1978) failed to find any difference in Machiavellianism totals of normal and psychopathic participants.

However, in all these studies, psychopaths were evaluated using the Psychopathic Deviate (Pd) scale of the MMPI, an instrument that is being employed with increasing reluctance in this context. For example, after Hare, Frazelle, and Cox (1978) failed to find any significant MMPI differences for prisoners rated high and low on psychopathy. Hare and Cox cautioned that "it would be unwise to base the selection [of psychopathic subjects] on only the Psychopathic Deviate...scale, as many do" (p. 13). Skinner and Erdle (1982) also questioned the capacity of the Pd scale to measure psychopathy, pointing out that only one item (out of 50) assesses interpersonal manipulation directly. Clearly, the equivocal results of previous studies may reflect shortcomings in the Pd scale. Thus, to examine better the nature of the heuristic relationship between Machiavellianism and psychopathy, the experiments reported here employed the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ; Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975), the psychoticism (P) scale of which directly measures psychopathic characteristics.

METHOD

Because of the inevitable and unsatisfactory attenuation of scores inherent in the use of the median split technique, and the impracticality of testing excessively large numbers of participants to obtain a sample of respectable size, in both studies Skinner's (1982b) simulation procedure for subject identification were utilized. In Experiment One, 76 undergraduates (28 males, 44 females) first familiarized themselves with a written summary of the Machiavellian individual (adapted from Christie, 1970a, pp. 3-4). Half the participants of each sex were then instructed to complete both the Mach V and the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ; Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975) "as a 'highly Machiavellian individual' would if he or she were filling in the questionnaires as honestly as possible". On the same questionnaires, the remaining participants were asked to adopt the response pattern of a non-Machiavellian.

Similarly, in Experiment Two, after carefully reading a description of the characteristic attitudes and behaviors of the primary psychopath (after Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975), 37 first year university students (13 males, 24 females) responded to the EPQ and Mach V in the way they thought "the questionnaires would be answered by a person fitting the description...just read". An equal number of participants completed these questionnaires according to a description of the secondary psychopath.

TABLE 1: MACH V AND EPQ SCORES FOR MACHIAVELLIANS (EXP. ONE) AND PSYCHOPATHS (EXP. TWO)

	<i>Mach V</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Lie</i>
<i>High Machs</i>	109.2	15.7*	12.7	8.4	3.8
<i>Low Machs</i>	92.2	3.3*	11.5	11.9	8.2
<i>Primary Psychopaths</i>	106.8*	23.1	6.0	6.8	3.5
<i>Secondary Psychopaths</i>	90.8*	3.4	16.9	18.0	9.8

$p < .05$

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As shown in Table 1, the results of both experiments are instructive. Specifically, compared to low Machs, high Machs obtained significantly higher P scores (Experiment One), while Mach V totals for primary psychopaths were significantly greater than those of secondary psychopaths (Experiment Two). Briefly summarized, both sets of results point to an association between Machiavellianism and *primary* psychopathy. Corroborative indications of such a relationship come from two main sources. First, not only was a report of low neuroticism scores in primary psychopaths (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1978) paralleled by a comparable discovery for high Machs (Skinner, 1982a), but, also, a combination of high impulsivity/low superego in "high P scorers" (Eysenck, 1982, p. 11) was found as well in high Machs (Skinner, Giokas, & Hornstein, 1976). Second, considerable overlap is apparent in the descriptive characteristics of high Machs and primary psychopaths, as shown in Table 2. The data reported here thus provide substantive evidence for the heretofore putative similarity of Machiavellianism to (primary) psychopathy (Skinner & Erdle, 1982). Based on Greenwald's (1967) distinction between "successful" and "unsuccessful" psychopaths, the present results also suggest a complementary hypothesis. While it would be premature to identify Eysenck and Eysenck's (1978) primary psychopath with Greenwald's (1967) "successful" psychopath, it may be that the mastery of the successful psychopath is mediated by a superior Machiavellian ability to avoid personal, social, and legal difficulties through the toughminded manipulation of other people.² Future researchers could investigate this intriguing possibility.

² Thus, for example, Saruk's (1975) failure to find high Mach scores in psychopathic inmates could reflect their "unsuccessful" (secondary) psychopathic natures (i.e., lacking in tough mindedness and manipulativeness).

TABLE 2: A DESCRIPTIVE COMPARISON OF THE HIGH MACH AND
PRIMARY PSYCHOPATH

<i>High Mach</i> (after Christie and Geis, 1970)	<i>Primary Psychopath (High P)</i> (after Eysenck, 1982)
<i>lack of emotional involvement</i>	<i>impersonal, cold</i>
<i>low morality</i>	<i>lack of concern for others</i>
<i>low commitment</i>	<i>lack of empathy</i>
<i>uses others to attain own ends</i>	<i>lack of concern for rights and welfare of others</i>
<i>manipulative, opportunistic</i>	<i>egocentric</i>
<i>deceitful, guileful</i>	<i>aggressive</i>

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