Machiavellianism

Christie and Geis (1970)

interpersonal influence in extremist groups (e.g., religious cults) with a focus on leaders

Politics of everyday interpersonal influence
Machiavellianism

Christie and Geis (1970)

Goals

Is there a class of individuals who regularly and consistently manipulate others with great success?

What are the specific tactics used in manipulation attempts?

What are the psychological orientations and processes that differentiate manipulative and non-manipulative persons?
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IDENTIFYING MANIPULATIVE PEOPLE: MACH IV SCALE

_The Prince_ by Niccolo Machiavelli (1500’s)
gives advice to a fictional prince on how to gain and maintain power
people as “objects to be manipulated with cool calculation and emotional detachment”
ends justify the means
Machiavellianism

IDENTIFYING MANIPULATIVE PEOPLE: MACH IV SCALE

Mach IV Scale
items paraphrased from The Prince and The Discourse
measured endorsement of a wide range of Machiavellian statements

Mach Scale – High Scores

“The best way to handle people is tell them what they want to hear”

“Never tell anyone the real reason you did something unless it is useful to do so”

“The biggest difference between criminals and other people is that criminals are stupid enough to get caught”

“Anyone who completely trusts anyone else is asking for trouble”
Machiavellianism

IDENTIFYING MANIPULATIVE PEOPLE: MACH IV SCALE

Mach IV Scale
items paraphrased from The Prince and The Discourse
measured endorsement of a wide range of Machiavellian statements

Mach Scale – Low Scores

“Honesty is the best policy in all cases”

“Most people are basically good and kind”

“Most people who get ahead in the world lead clean moral lives”

“There is no excuse for lying to someone”
Machiavellianism

IDENTIFYING MANIPULATIVE PEOPLE: MACH IV SCALE

Mach IV Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Correlated?</th>
<th>Uncorrelated?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual ability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psychopathology</td>
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<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political ideology</td>
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<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarianism</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cynical view of human nature</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Machiavellianism

WHAT HIGH MACHIAVELLIANS DO

endorse philosophy

AND willing and able to outmaneuver, manipulate, and exploit others using whatever tactics necessary.
Machiavellianism

WHAT HIGH MACHIAVELLIANS DO

Bargaining Study (Christie and Geis, 1970)

Divide $20 in a bargaining game among 3 people only 2 get $$
Groups of 1 high, 1 medium, 1 low Mach.

Results
Highs: $11.14; Medium: $6.28; Lows: $2.58

Strategies
Highs: size up those who are willing to make a deal
Lows: unsuspecting, trusting
Machiavellianism

WHAT HIGH MACHIAVELLIANS DO

The Young Machivellian  (Braginsky,1970)

Offered 10 year olds 5 cents for each bitter tasting crackers s/he could get another child to eat.

**Highs:** More eagerly took to the task

More successful at get the other one to eat crackers

**Highs:**  6.46 crackers

**Lows:**  2.79 crackers

**Strategies**

Lied, offered bribes, coercion
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SITUATIONAL CONTIGENCIES

Need to face-to-face contact
Latitude for improvisation
Opportunity to use emotional arousal

Critical factor – emotional arousal they generate in others AND control over their own emotions
# Machiavellianism

## SITUATIONAL CONTINGENCIES

Summary of 50 Mach. Experiments

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<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
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<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>High Machs “lose”</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Machiavellianism**

**DISPOSITIONAL DIFFERENCES**

**High Machs: “Cool Syndrome”**
- Resistance to social influence
- Orientation to cognition/rationality
- Initiating and controlling

**Low Machs: “Soft Touch”**
- Susceptibility to social influence
- Orientation to person
- Accepting and following

Highs derive pleasure from succeeding in manipulative behavior
### Machiavellianism

**ORIGINS: LEARN IT AT HOME?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LOW</th>
<th>HIGH</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dad’s Mach. Level</strong></td>
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<td><img src="https://via.placeholder.com/15" alt="✓" /></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>HIGH</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mom’s Mach. level</strong></td>
<td>LOW</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- ![✓](https://via.placeholder.com/15)
Machiavellianism

Is Machiavellianism always “bad”?  

Highs: resistance to non-rational forms of social pressure  
Lows: trusting, but gullible, vulnerable to exploitation

CONCLUSIONS

Used dispositional strategy to:

Identify manipulative & non-manipulative people  
Understand the processes of interpersonal manipulation  
Understand the situational contingencies facilitating manipulation