A Machiavellian-Based Model of Personality Traits

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Abstract

Research (Kang, & Stellwagen, 2016) has found that Machiavellianism (Mach) in children predicts relational aggression (RAgg) and callous-unemotional (CU) traits. The Mach IV scale (Christie, 1970), the most widely used Mach scale, is divided into three areas; interpersonal tactics, views of human nature, and morality. There is a paucity of research on whether the divisions of the Mach IV scale constitute lower order factors of Mach. In the current study, we hypothesized that a Machiavellian-based model (MBM) comprised of traits of dominance-egoctrans, paranoia, and lack of empathy would correlate to CU traits and predict RAgg. Parents of children ages 5-18 (N=759) completed the Dimensional Personality Symptom Inventory for Children (De Clercq, & De Fruyt, 2003), the Inventory for Callous-Unemotional Traits (ICU; Frick, 2006), and the Children’s Social Behaviour Scale (cuss; 1999). The MBM was significantly related to CU traits and predicted RAgg over CU traits. This empirical data supports the theoretical relationship between the MBM and Mach.

Methods

Participants
759 caregivers reported on children aged 6-18
Children were 51% Male; M_age = 11.26, SD = 3.6

Measures
MBM: Dimensional Personality Symptom Inventory (De Clercq & De Fruyt, 2003)
ICU: Inventory of Callous-Unemotional Traits (Frick, 2006)
RAgg: Children’s Social Behaviour Scale (Cook and Gevirtz, 1996)

Correlations between the MBM and the ICU Total Score

![Correlation Chart]

Note: ** significant at p < .001

Increased prediction of RAgg by the MBM total score over the ICU total score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>ΔR²</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICU</td>
<td>.399**</td>
<td>.159**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICU</td>
<td>.201**</td>
<td>.113**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBM</td>
<td>.390**</td>
<td>.272</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

ICU = Inventory for Callous-Unemotional Traits Total Score
MBM = Machiavellian Based Model Total Score

Note: ** significant at p < .001

Conclusions

• All MBM scores were significantly related to the ICU total score although paranoia was not the least related
• As CU Traits are only correlates of psychopathy, paranoia may still differentiate psychopathy from Mach
• The MBM predicted RAgg after controlling for CU traits, reflecting the unique connection between Mach and RAgg

Limitations
• No standard measure of Mach was used
• Previous literature has focused on self-report, the current study used caregiver reports

Future Directions
• Investigate the degree to which the MBM correlates to the Mach IV (Christie & Geis, 1970)
• Investigate whether paranoia differentiates Mach from psychopathy by looking at hostile perceptions

References


Further Information and Acknowledgements

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More information on related projects can be obtained at http://web.psych.utoronto.ca/tackettlab
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