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ABSTRACT
This article reports on the findings of research into the
manipulative tendencies of 289 professional social workers in
Michigan. Utilizing the Machiavellian scale and comparing the
results with other studies, the author concludes that social
workers, contrary to the conventional wisdom, have strong
manipulative tendencies. Additionally, the more manipulative
social workers are not isolated in any specific field or area of
practice, but are scattered throughout the profession. Rather
than be alarmed by this recognition, the author feels the
profession must accept this reality and acknowledge that these
manipulative tendencies are mitigated by a compassionate,
humanistic value system.

IN THE CASE OF MANIPULATION
     Certain words have such a negative connotation within the
social work profession that their mere utterance immediately
impugns the credibility of the source. Probably the most
representative of this category of words in social work is

manipulation. In competition with such wholesome and ethical terms
as individuality, self-determination, and non-judgmental attitudes,
manipulation cognitively as well as behaviorally emerges as
sinister and foreboding. The profession's conventional wisdom
fosters the belief that manipulation is an act performed by
unscrupulous people whose goals and values cannot hope to measure
up to the lofty ideals of social work. Used car salesmen
manipulate, political lobbyists manipulate, and periodically
Madison Avenue hucksters manipulate, but professional, compas-
sionate social workers do not or at least should not manipulate.

     This is not to suggest that the notion of manipulation is
entirely censored from the social work literature. Some authors
have incorporated the concept of manipulation into their writings
on social work practice in a very gentle and seemingly acceptable
manner. Hollis dared to discuss the necessity of environmental
manipulation as a legitimate social work intervention technique.[1]
Rothman is somewhat more explicit about the appropriate exercise
of manipulation. In outlining his three models of community
organization, he notes that the medium of change for the practi-
tioner is manipulation of small task-oriented groups, manipulation
of formal organizations, and manipulation of mass organizations
and political processes.[2] It is never suggested in either writing
that the practitioner manipulates individuals, for this
admission would violate the social work gospel. Unfortunately,
this deception simply becomes a classic example of reification.
Obviously, all groups, organizations, and institutions are
comprised of people and it is these individual people that must
ultimately be manipulated if the desired changes in the environ-
mental entities are to transpire. It seems clear from this

assessment that manipulation is an appropriate professional
technique or skill, providing it is pursued in the consumer's
interests.

Brager began to address this subtle contradiction that
permeates the social work profession regarding the ethical use of
manipulation. He observed that many social workers are engaged in
client advocacy, that advocacy requires political behavior, and
that political behavior includes manipulation.[3] Having made this
radical statement, he subsequently apologizes, but he does not
withdraw the contention. He states, "the point, of course, is not
that artfulness (manipulation) is necessarily desirable, but that
it is an inevitable concommitant of certain roles and tasks".[4]
He also claims that "manipulation should generally be eschewed
except when it is clearly in the best interests of the disadvan-
taged client".[5] Brager reluctantly endorses manipulative
techniques by social workers of other individuals (non-clients) in
certain circumscribed advocacy situations.

Given Brager's contribution to the field and his rather
limited prescripton for manipulative action, social work should
have welcomed such a fundamental discussion. However, his article
prompted some indignant responses. Rothenberg was very adamant
in her displeasure; "if we accept the use of manipulation and
guile as legitimate techniques to be used against target systems,
we do also accept these same values as legitimate techniques to
be used with clients? Are we, as a profession developing one set
of values to be used in relation to target systems and another
set to be used for those with whom we identify?"[6] Notwithstanding
her confusion between techniques and values, Rothenberg refuses
to acknowledge that social workers should ever engage in

manipulation, and by inference, those social workers who do
intentionally manipulate are abdicating their professional
responsibility. In another reaction, Ginsberg takes similar
umbrage; "students of political science and politicians would
find the equation of political behavior and manipulation
insulting."[7]

MACHIAVELLIAN SCALE
     It is responsible to conclude that the term manipulation
creates consternation both inside and outside the profession of
social work. At the mention of the word, people instantly begin
disclaiming any affection for such an odious concept. Partly in
response to this propensity, Richard Christie and others at
Columbia University began an intensive investigation of manipu-
lation. This investigation included the types of people who
have manipulative tendencies and their behavior patterns. Their
working definition of manipulative tendencies was an individual's
belief or attitude that others can be influenced or change in
their thinking, perceptions, or behaviors through the use of
guile in interpersonal relations.[8]
     In order to measure this notion about a person's belief
regarding human nature and the quality of human relationships,
Christie and his colleagues began extracting passages from
Machiavelli's The Prince and The Discourses. After considerable
trials, seventy-one items were culled from the writings. The items
included such statements as "honest is the best policy in all
cases", "anyone who completely trusts anyone else is asking for
trouble", and "it is possible to be good in all respects". These
statements were then administered in Likert format to 1,196

undergraduates in three different universities. Analysis of the
responses indicated fifty of the items discriminated between high
and low scores, with twenty of the most discriminating statements
isolated for further research. An early version of the
Machiavellian Scale (Mach IV) included twenty items, ten of them
stated as pro-Machiavellian positions and the other ten stated
as anti-Machiavellian positions. In essence, a high score
indicated a strong belief that others could be influenced (mani-
pulated) while a low score indicated a belief to the contrary.

The reversal of the Machiavellian positions in the Mach IV
was an attempt to reduce response set biases. However, this
counterbalancing did not effectively eliminate respondents
answering questions in socially desirable ways. In an effort to
further reduce this tendency and this increase the validity and
reliability of the instrument, the Mach V scale was developed.
The Mach V incorporated the Edwards Social Desirability Scale[9]
and therefore minimized the likelihood that people would respond
in socially acceptable terms rather than their actual inclinations.
The resulting Mach V scale was a twenty question forced choice
format that reflected the willingness of respondents to agree with
Machiavelli and his perception of the human condition.

For illustrative purposes, the following item from the Mach V
scale is presented:
__A. It is best to give others the impression that you can change
      your mind easily.
__B. It is a good working policy to keep on good terms with
      everyone.
__C. Honesty is the best policy in all cases.
The instructions stated that the respondents should read each of

the three statements in each group. They should then decide first
which of the statements is most true or comes closest to
describing their own beliefs and put a plus (+) by that statement.
The respondents should then decide which of the remaining two
statements was most false or farthest from their own beliefs and
put a minus (-) by that statement. ·It was imperative for the
respondents to complete all twenty items in this manner.
     In reference to the preceding example, the most Machiavellian
(manipulative tendency) response was a plus by statement "B" and
a minus by statement "C", with statement "A", the matched socially
desirable statement left blank. The least Machiavellian response
was the opposite, that is, a plus by statement "C" and a minus by
statement "B". Any other combination of responses was a midrange
belief between the two extremes.
     The scoring of the Mach V was a relatively simple process.
Each of the twenty items was rated separately and then added
together for a total score and only the total score was salient.
Returning to the illustration, the most Machiavellian response
(B+C-) received seven points while the least Machiavellian
response (C+B-) received one point. Any other set of responses
received three or five points contingent upon the arrangement; a
(A+B-) or (C+A-) received three points and a (A+C-) or (B+A-)
received five points. Obviously, the potential cumulative range
for the twenty item Mach V based on the scoring system was from
20 to 140. However, in order to establish a theoretical mean of
100, Christie added twenty points to each score elevating the
range from 40 to 160.
     The Machiavellian scale has been rigorously tested since its
initial development from several different perspectives. The

analysis of the data has taken the form of dividing the res-
pondents into high and low Mach scores. High Mach scores are
those above the actual mean, while low Mach scores are below the
actual mean, and then comparing these findings to another charac-
teristic or behavior. All of these studies repeatedly demonstrate
that high Machs (strong manipulative tendencies) do not appear
significantly different from their low Mach opposites on most
measures of social and personality traits, intelligence, political
preference, ideology, and racial attitudes.

    Much of the research in this area is concerned with the actual
behavioral differences between people who score high or low on the
Machiavellian scale. Since the inception of Christie's original
scales, at least fifty laboratory experiments have been conducted.[10]
These studies have contributed much to the developing data base on
the behavioral implications of manipulation. The majority of these
experiments tend to corroborate the findings that high Machs
perceive other people as readily manipulatable and easily
influenced. This attitude unalterably led to high Machs winning,
influencing, or controlling situations in which bargaining or
compromise strategies are essential. Yet, high Machs have not been
shown to be necessarily more hostile, vicious, or vindictive
compared to lows.

    Christie and his associates have involved themselves very
intimately into the study of Machiavellianism, in particular, high
Machs. Their initial impression of a high Mach was a negative one
"associated with shadowy and unsavory manipulations."[11] After
considerably investigation with Machiavellianism, Christie's
group now states, "after watching subjects in laboratory experiments
we found ourselves having a perverse admiration for the high Machs'

ability to outdo others in experimental situations."[12]

SOCIAL WORK AND MACHIAVELLIANISM

Previous Research
    As discussed previously, the profession of social work has an
almost natural aversion to the notion of manipulation. In an
effort to assess the legitimacy of this belief, Horner et. al.[13]
administered the Mach scale to 45 graduate students and 49 seniors
majoring in social work and 12 graduate students and 40 seniors
majoring in business administration at a large midwestern univer-
sity. The authors felt "it made sense to argue that the
humanitarian tradition and publicized value base of social work
would result in the recruitment of students committed to viewing
individuals as an end in themselves rather than a means to the
ends of another."[14] Imagine the enigma they confronted when their
findings indicated that graduate level social work students had in
their phraseology the "dubious distinction" of attaining the
highest Mach scores of the four study samples. To be specific,
56% of the graduate social work students, but only 45% of the
graduate business students had a high Machiavellian orientation.
On the other hand, 42% of the undergraduate social work students,
but 51% of the undergraduate business students had a high
Machiavellian commitment. They were not surprised to find that
social workers interested in macro level practice evidenced
greater adherence to the ideas of Machiavelli than those inter-
ested in micro level practice.

Current Research Methodology

Following a similar line of logic, if not a similar predisposition to manipulative tendencies, this author studied a sample of professional social workers obtained from the National Association of Social Workers membership list in the state of Michigan. Twenty percent of the approximately 2350 members of the chapter were selected at random to participate in the research. The 470 social workers in this sample were mailed two questionnaires with a follow-up reminder letter three weeks later.

The first questionnaire sought demographic and professional information such as sex, race, age, level of education, number of years in practice, field of practice, i.e. direct service, consultation, administration. The second questionnaire was the previously described Mach V scale developed by Christie.

Of the 470 research packets mailed, 289 or 61% were returned by the final cut-off date. The returns came proportionately from every section of Michigan effectively mitigating any geographic variances. Table 1 illustrates the frequency and percentage results of the respondents to the demographic questionnaire for sex, race, age, degree, and years in practice. In order to place this study's findings in perspective, they were compared with analogous information compiled by the NASW Manpower Data Bank (MDB) in a nationwide survey published in February, 1975. This current study's sample was comprised of 73% females and 27% males compared to MDB's 63% females and 37% males. The racial composition was very similar in the two studies. Whites provided by far the largest group with an 89% proportion in this study versus 85.5% in the MDB. Blacks comprised approximately 8% in both studies while the MDB predictably had a wider range of other racial groupings.*
*The percentage of Hispanic social workers would not be as likely to occur in Michigan as opposed to Texas, N.Y. CA. etc.

The age characteristic could not be compared directly with the MDB sample because surprisingly age was not an item in that study. Yet, compared with a somewhat analogous category, years in practice, several comparisons can be made. For example, the current research indicated 56% of the sample were in professional practice eight years or less; the MDB sample found that 54% of their sample were in practice nine years or less. The current study found 15% were in practice twenty-one years or more; the MDB was slightly higher at 20 percent. This comparison suggests that not only were there similarities between the two studies regarding years in practice, but also that the age characteristic of this study is probably representative.

Finally, even though NASW changed the requirements for joining the organization several years ago, the composition of NASW by educational degree has not been significantly altered. The 1975 MDB study showed that 82% of the sample had an MSW while 13% had a BA/BSW and 3% had doctorates. This study's findings were 84% MSW, 10% BA/BSW and 3% doctorates.

Table 2 demonstrates frequency and percentages by field and area of practice. Here again, comparisons with the MDB were somewhat restricted due to variations in category clusters. Nevertheless, broad similarities were manifestly apparent. For instance, this research indicated 8% were employed by public welfare as opposed to 7% in the MDB. Additionally, 45% of the Michigan sample, while 38% of the national sample were employed by mental health related agencies. In the health field, 10% in the Michigan sample and 16% in the national sample were providing such services. In the areas of practice, similar comparisons were conducted. For instance, 43% of the NASW members in Michigan stated they were

performing direct services, while a like percentage, 44%, were
carrying out like functions in the national NASW sample.
Interestingly, administration in the Michigan sample was stated
by 12% as opposed to 21% nationally, while supervision was listed
by 15% of the Michigan sample compared to 8% nationally. When
these categories are combined the percentages are 27% and 29%
respectively.
      Despite the differences manifested between the demographic
characteristics of the state and national samples, the similarities
were impressive. It seems quite clear that the sample for this
study, not only provides a fair profile of the state but closely
resembles the characteristics of the recent NASW nationwide survey.

Findings
      The findings of this current study of professional social
workers in Michigan utilizing the Mach V scale will be compared
with other researchers employing the same instrument. Particular
emphasis will be placed on the 1963 National Public Opinion
Research Center (NORC) study. The 1482 respondents in the NORC
study were a representative sample of non-institutionalized adults
in the United States. It is the only national sample survey for
non-college adults responding to the scale.
      Table 3 delineates the range, frequency, and percentage of
Mach V scores by professional social workers in Michigan. In this
table and discussions low Mach means the respondent believed
others could not be easily influenced nor were the respondents
likely to be successful at manipulating others, while high Mach
means the respondents believed others could be influenced and the
respondents were likely to be successful at manipulating others.

As shown, the mean score for the entire social work sample was
101.95 with a median score of 102.00.   These figures compare to
a mean of 92.26 for the NORC sample.   This finding certainly
corroborates Horner's unexpected discovery on social work and
business students.   However, previous use of the Mach scale with
other helping professions, psychologists and psychiatrists,
foreshadowed the possibility of this kind of data.[15]
    Michigan NASW members might have manipulative tendencies in
general, but perhaps it is a special type of social worker that is
more Machiavellian than others.   Table 4 focuses on that issue by
sex, race, age degree, and years in practice.   With the exception
of age, there were no significant findings regarding Mach scores.
That is, low and high Mach social workers were dispersed randomly
throughout the various demographic categories.   Regarding age, as
the age cohort increases, the Mach score concommitantly decreases.
The finding was expected given the work of Christie and others
on age and Mach score relationships.   The surprising aspect of the
age variable was the discovery that even the age cohorts; 46-55,
56-65, and 66+ had a higher mean Mach score than the NORC sample
where the median age was 42.   Even taking into consideration that
Mach scores overall may be rising, the comparison is instructive.
    If the more highly manipulative social workers were not
clustered by any demographic characteristics than possibly they
gravitated to certain fields or areas of practice.   For example,
Christie suggested that administrators probably need to be more
manipulative[16] and Brager emphasized that social workers engaged in
political behavior are inclined to manipulate.   Table 5 represents
Machiavellian scores by fields and areas of practice.   This data
indicates the relationship between those social workers who stated

-552-

they were in a specific field or area versus those who were not.
The findings were very illuminating. By field of practice, only
Mental Health respondents had significantly greater manipulative
tendencies. The remaining fields clearly had a scattering of
high and low Machs including such fields as corrections and
politics.   The most interesting finding relating to area of
practice was that no area differed significantly from any other on
mean Mach V scores save teaching. The data indicates that the more
Machiavellian, manipulative social workers in Michigan were not
concentrated in any specific field or area, rather, low and high
Machs practiced throughout all fields and areas.

Discussion
     Manipulation, in word and deed, remains a provocative element
in the profession of social work. The profession's norms suggest
that practitioners do not believe in and certainly proscribe
manipulation of other people, especially their clients. Social
work even has such timeless concepts as non-judgmental attitudes
and self-determination that ostensibly protect the profession and
its consumers against abuses. Yet, two different studies, examining
two different social work populations arrived at the same conclu-
sion: social workers do support the propositions of Machiavelli
along a range of manipulative tendencies.
     Horner, Reid, and Okanes found this prospect to be unsettling.
They view some manipulation as a necessary incentive to social
work intervention, but they are concerned about an excessive
manipulative orientation. They state, "Our study suggests that
educators should be on the lookout for manipulative tendencies and
can reasonably assume that a substantial portion of social work

-553-

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students have relatively high manipulative orientations".[17] This
current research strongly supports the realization that social work
students and ultimately social work practitioners manipulate, how-
ever, the cautionary admonition Horner offers is presumptuous.
There is absolutely no research evidence to indicate that the more
manipulative social workers are less successful in accomplishing
professional goals and objectives. In fact, the laboratory exper-
iments conducted with high Mach people emphasize their ability to
succeed regularly in those situations involving negotiation,
compromise, and bargaining.

    In many respects, this conclusion that social workers are
manipulators should neither be shocking nor alarming. Members
from other helping professions were shown to have this attribute.
The nature of social work is to bring about change through face-
to-face interactions, challenge the status quo, and to act
professionally, not emotionally. These are all characteristics
isolated by Christie in his initial research and are the bases of
Machiavellianism. It appears necessary that social workers must
participate in some forms of manipulation if they are to accomplish
any goals consistent with their consumers, agencies, and political
beliefs.

    Social work must disavow the self deceiving notion that its
members do not manipulate. Social workers do manipulate others.
Hopefully these manipulative tendencies are mitigated by the
profession's values that promote the general welfare, support
purposeful relationships, and adhere to a humanistic code of ethics.
Moreover, it is essential that these manipulative tendencies are
manifested consciously and purposefully to allow for the individ-
ual's professional judgment regarding the appropriateness of the

activity. Therefore, the primary issue is not whether social
workers will manipulate--they will--but whether these manipulations
are instituted to accomplish social goals in concert with
transcending professional values.

     At the micro level of practice, the premise that professional
values will supercede unhealthy manipulations is supported in a
recent article by Shore. He states, "It is the ethical responsi-
bility of therapists to use their skills to manipulate behavior
and assist those who are suffering. Therapists who are inflexibly
'supportive' while alcoholics continue to kill themselyes need to
reconsider the moral repercussions of their position".[18] He
concludes with the clarifying opinion, "manipulation of behavior
is unethical only when used to meet the therapist's needs, not
the client's. Therapists who deny their role as manipulators are
fooling themselves".[19]

     At the macro level of practice, professionally responsible
manipulations are demonstrated in the writings and actions of Saul
Alinsky. Alinsky, though not a social worker, is a model for
much of the community organization and social action undertaken in
the profession. Certainly no one can readily discount the
importance of his work on behalf of neighborhood and community
groups. Throughout his essays, but especially "Of Means and
Ends"[20] Alinsky's commitment to ethical manipulative practices is
very evident and his support for the poor, disenfranchised and
disadvantaged is unequivocal.

     If the profession of social work is serious about cultivating
change in individuals, organizations, and institutions, then the
concept of manipulation cannot be summarily repudiated. Unless
there is some attempt to attain this recognition, social work

practitioners and consumers will be done an important disservice.
In essence, this is the manipulative strategy many strive for in
order to impact individuals, communities, and intransigent system.
Irrespective of one's personal philosophy towards these methods,
the changes pursued are synonymous with changes long endorsed by
social work. This objective is especially true now given the
wholesale assault on the powerless presently occurring. Alinsky
captures the ethical dilemma in the form of a question, "Do
these particular ends justify these particular means?"[21] If the
profession's members, individually and collectively, can adopt
an affirmative response to this question and accept manipulation
openly as a viable tool for change, perhaps social workers can
also neutralize such other pejorative concepts as power and
conflict.

FOOTNOTES
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17. Horner, et al., op cit., p. 62.
18. Jeffrey Shore, "Use of Paradox in the Treatment of Alcoholism",
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       p. 12.
19. Ibid. p. 19.
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21. Ibid. p. 207.

TABLE 1

Demographic Characteristics by Sex, Race, Age, Degree, Years in
Practice (n=289)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
SEX		
Female	210	73
Male	79	27
Total	289	100%
RACE		
Black	24	8
White	257	89
Other	8	3
Total	289	100%
AGE		
25 and Below	24	8
26-35	98	34
36-45	59	21
46-55	61	21
56-65	32	11
66 and Above	15	5
Total	289	100%
DEGREE		
B.A.	16	6
B.S.W.	12	4
M.S.W.	243	84
Ph.D/D.S.W.	8	3

Other	10	3
Total	289	100%
YEARS IN PRACTICE		
2 and Less	62	21
3-8	102	35
9-14	54	19
15-20	28	10
21 and More	43	15
Total	289	100%

TABLE 2

Demographic Characteristics by Field and Area of Practice (n=289)

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
FIELD		
Public Welfare	28	8
Mental Health	158	45
Health	36	10
Corrections	15	4
Schools	45	13
Education	21	6
Politics	5	1
Other*	46	13
Total	354+	100%
AREA		
Direct Service	224	43
Consultation	57	11
Community Organization	26	5
Supervision	80	15
Administration	62	12
Planning	28	5
Teaching	33	6
Other**	14	3
Total	524+	100%

*Includes a variety of different types of fields; child welfare, gerontology, family service, etc.

**Includes a variety of different areas, research, community
relations, labor-management relations, etc.
+Respondents were able to select more than one field or area of
practice.

TABLE 3

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Michigan Social Workers
by Mach V Scores (n=289)

Score	Frequency	Percentage
LOW MACH		
82	1	.4
86	3	1.0
88	5	1.7
90	8	2.8
92	16	5.5
94	26	9.0
96	29	10.0
98	29	10.0
100	27	9.3
102	25	8.7
104	21	7.3
106	22	7.6
108	16	7.3
110	16	5.6
112	13	4.5
114	7	2.4
116	7	2.4
118	5	1.7
120	4	1.4
122	4	1.4
HIGH MACH		
Total	289	100%

NOTE: $\bar{x} = 101.94$

TABLE 4

Machiavellian Scores of Michigan Social Workers by Sex, Race, Age,
Degree, and Years in Practice (n=289)

Characteristics	Mean	S.D.	Frequency (%)	
SEX				
Female	101.84	8.03	210	(73%)
Male	102.22	7.81	79	(27%)
RACE				
Black	103.33	8.64	24	(8%)
White	102.02	7.92	257	(89%)
Other	95.25	3.20	8	(3%)
AGE				
25 and Below	103.25	6.82	24	(8%)
26-35	103.87	8.53	98	(34%)
36-45	100.61	8.14	59	(21%)
46-55	101.21	7.62	61	(21%)
56-65	100.31	7.38	32	(11%)
66 and Above	98.93	4.95	15	(5%)
DEGREE				
B.A.	101.62	6.94	16	(6%)
B.S.W.	103.17	5.56	12	(4%)
M.S.W.	101.82	8.10	243	(84%)
Ph.D/D.S.W.	103.75	9.88	8	(3%)
Other	102.60	8.00	10	(3%)

YEARS IN PRACTICE

2 and Less	103.07	6.61	62	(21%)
3-8	102.36	9.25	102	(35%)
9-14	101.96	7.98	54	(19%)
15-20	100.14	7.44	28	(10%)
21 and More	100.46	6.52	43	(15%)

TABLE 5

Machiavellian Scores of Michigan Social Workers by Field and Area
of Practice

Characteristic	Mean	S.D.
FIELD		
Public Welfare	99.75	7.20
Mental Health*	102.92	7.84
Health	101.33	8.34
Corrections	99.20	5.23
Schools	100.58	8.49
Education	102.76	7.52
Politics	102.00	8.72
AREA		
Direct Service	101.80	7.89
Consultation	101.79	8.10
Community Organization	101.23	8.20
Supervision	101.86	8.06
Administration	101.76	7.75
Planning	101.21	6.81
Teaching*	103.15	6.89