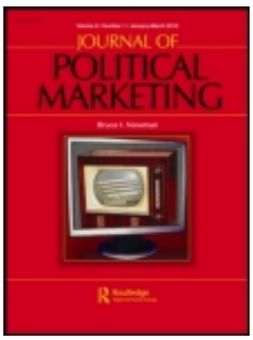

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Journal of Political Marketing

ISSN: 1537-7857 (Print) 1537-7865 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/wplm20

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To cite this article: Esen Gurbuz & Esra Eris (2016) The Effect of Personal Idealism, Relativism, and Machiavellianism on Voting Tendency: A Turkish Study, Journal of Political Marketing, 15:1, 45-69, DOI: 10.1080/15377857.2014.959683

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/15377857.2014.959683

Journal of Political Marketing, 15:45–69, 2016

ISSN: 1537-7857 print/1537-7865 online
DOI: 10.1080/15377857.2014.959683

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The Effect of Personal Idealism, Relativism, and Machiavellianism on Voting Tendency: A Turkish Study

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This study examined the relationship between Turkish voters' ethical characteristics and voting tendencies to the political left, right, or center by applying the Ethics Position Questionnaire (EPQ) and Mach IV to the collection of data for analysis from 500 voters in a national election in Turkey. The most significant finding is that there was no statistically meaningful relationship among levels of idealism, relativism, or Machiavellianism and voting tendencies to the political left, right, and center. However, results generated by EPQ and Mach IV questionnaire found that voting tendencies were affected by personal relativism (0.10), followed by Machiavellianism (−0.03) and idealism (−0.03). Results show that respondents' voting tendency was most affected by the level of their personal relativism, but the magnitude of the effect was not statistically significant. The mean scores for Machiavellianism and relativism attributes were on average in the mid-range of the scale, while mean scores for idealism show that the participating voters agreed most strongly with the statements relating to the idealism and could be characterized as absolutist by their low relativism and high idealism. The results demonstrate a positive linear relationship, linking both idealism and relativism to Machiavellianism and indicate statistically significant positive correlations among the three variables.

KEYWORDS ethics, idealism, relativism, Machiavellianism, voting tendency, political orientation, Turkey

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Given that the countries of the world differ in their level of economic development, the nature of their politico-legal systems, their cultural norms, and their expectations concerning business conduct, a commercial practice that is normal in one can be illegal in another, or one considered unethical in one may be acceptable in another (Vitell and Paolillo 2004). In short, what is ethical or not changes from condition to condition, company to company, and person to person.

It is generally agreed that ethical issues are the subject of ever-increasing attention in the context of marketing practice, that firms are demonstrating sensitivity to public opinion with regard to business ethics, and that marketers are exhibiting willingness to act accordingly. Since consumers' moral rules, principles, and standards act as the guide to their decisions to adopt or reject goods or services (Van Kenhove, Vermeir, and Verniers 2001), and by extension political parties, effective political marketing management requires a clear understanding of perceptions and beliefs in the voting marketplace with regard to ethical practices and issues.

Just as in commercial marketing, political marketing campaigns may on occasion manipulate information by communicating it in a misleading way or by withholding facts essential to an informed voting decision. Torlak (2007) has observed such unethical political marketing in operation in Turkey, in the form of over-promising to special interest groups, disseminating one-sided propaganda, withholding inconvenient truths, and using information overload to change the agenda or confuse public opinion. Since a party's social and ethical policy is a potential determinant of voters' decisions, political strategists should be concerned to research and communicate policies that are consonant with its actual manifesto.

Freestone and McGoldrick (2007) argue that, just as business firms must decide which strategic issues are pertinent to the maintenance of a long-term interactive relationship with their customers, political marketers should concern themselves with the appropriateness of their practices to the priorities of the electorate and consider how best to incorporate those into coherent overall campaign theme. The role of political marketing planning is to close the gap between voters' expectations of a party and the promises communicated by its rivals (Baines, Harris, and Lewis 2002).

When that gap is closed in a way that is perceived to be manipulative, political marketing and communication strategies are often described as "Machiavellian." Richmond (2001) quoted from Christie and Geis has defined Machiavellianism as "a process by which the manipulator gets more of some kind of reward than he would have gotten without manipulating, while someone else gets less, at least within the immediate context" (p. 13). Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) himself wrote, in *The Prince*: "Any person who decides in every situation to act as a good man is bound to be destroyed in the company of so many men who are not good. Wherefore, if the Prince desires to stay in power, he must learn how to be not good, and must avail himself of that

ability, or not, as the occasion requires" (Richmond 2001, p. 13). Today, researchers measure the Machiavelliansim of general or political behavior by means of the well-validated 20-item Mach IV scale, which assesses a respondent's belief that others are susceptible to manipulation by a third party.

Before the start of the current decade, the literature treated voters and political parties as consumers and producers, respectively, and researchers had sought to understand the psyche of voters from a consumer behavior perspective (O'Cass and Nataraajan 2003). More recently, such authors as Freestone and McGoldrick (2007) have argued that the theoretical framework of political marketing should be extended beyond the basic exchange relationship rooted derived from economics, which O'Shaughnessy (2001) attributes in particular to the influential writings of Kotler. Specifically, he asserts that unpaid-for publicity in the press and broadcast media is more influential than "political advertising and other communication techniques of commercial derivation" and that it should not therefore be assumed that "political contexts are invariably analogous to business to the extent that methods can be imported and used with equal effect." Peng and Hackley (2009) argue that, at the macro level of analysis, voters can be consumers and vice versa in the day-to-day setting. It is generally assumed that the majority will support the party in power as long as it continues to deliver the economic and social benefits they desire. When it is perceived not to be doing so, they will tend to gravitate toward the parties that promise those benefits.

Shaw, Newholm, and Dickinson (2006) defined consumers as agents in the creation of the societies of which they are a part, by their purchasing behavior, and equally as influencers of their social environment by their votes in political elections and also noted that this notion was at least a century old, Fetter having suggested that every buyer determines in some degree the direction of industry. A study by Peng and Hackley (2009) sought to add nuance to previous explorations of the voter-consumer analogy, in order to generate new insights into the wider application of the marketing concept to voting behavior. Brennan and Henneberg (2008) concluded that "voter value," by analogy with "consumer value," could be the basis of a promising approach to the development of political marketing strategy. French and Smith (2010) treated political parties and/or individual politicians as brands and found, in a study of partisan voters in the UK, insights into the nature and equity of brand associations for the two main political parties.

Essentially, voters are faced with two basic decisions: whom to vote for and, more fundamentally, whether to vote at all. To vote for no candidate may be the most basic political statement of all by a voter (Johnston and Pattie 2006). In this paper, we consider how personal ethics, expressed as idealism, relativism, or Machiavellianism, affected the decision of those who did vote in an election in Turkey to favor the left, right, or center political ideology.

The aim of the study it reports was, first, to assess the personal idealism or relativism of a sample the voters who took part in that election and to

determine the effect of personal Machiavellianism on those characteristics. Is the level of ethical characters of voters related to their being Machiavellian? The second aim was to discover how all three personal ethical characteristics affected their voting response to the parties' ideologies: Was it sympathy with a "radical," "moderate," or unqualified "left," "right," or "center" stance? How many took an apolitical "neutral" position?

The field study examined the ethical frames of reference (idealist-relativist-Machiavellian) and voting tendencies (left-right-center) of a sample of voters in Niğde, Turkey, in a general election in 2007. Their personal ethical characteristics were measured on a scale adopted from the previous studies discussed in the literature review which follows. Ozonsoy (2004) has shown that, beyond the sampling location, some Turkish voters typically act according to traditional beliefs, while others are partisan supporters of one party or another and that some are simply not interested in party politics at all.

In the 2007 general election in Turkey, competition for the popular vote had been among three parties: AKP, the Justice and Development Party; CHP, the Republican People's Party; and MHP, the National Action Party. At the time of the study, the three-party electoral contest continued, but a fourth contender had been added: BDP, the Peace and Democracy Party, founded in 2008 in response to escalating terrorist activity in favor of the establishment of a Kurdish State. Rose (2008) argued that:

> "The 2007 Turkish election illustrates the process of parties competing on terms that divide the electorate. The [CHP] attacked the governing [AKP] as threatening the foundations of Atatürk's secular republic . . . the MHP attacked the governing party for its alleged failure to defend Turkey's national identity. Nonetheless, the AKP won reelection with a big majority of seats in the Grand National Assembly [but] fell short of winning half the vote: more Turks voted for losing parties than for the party that won control of government" (p. 363).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The term "ethics" can describe an academic discipline, also referred to as moral philosophy, which studies the formed moral rules of a society and researches its moral codes in a systematic way (Avcılar and Gürbüz 2008). At the individual level, "morals" defines a personal philosophy based (normally) on an interpretation of the ethical norms currently prevailing in the individual's immediate environment. At the corporate level, as Vitell and Paolillo (2003) observe, regional and national differences in economic development, politico-legal systems, and cultural and commercial norms mean that business behavior that is normal in one place may be considered unethical or actually be illegal in another and vice versa. In short, what is

"ethical" or "moral" comportment changes from condition to condition, organization to organization, and person to person.

Individuals have always obeyed certain unwritten codes of conduct in their relationships with others, whether they live in a civilized or a primitive society. But it cannot be said that all human behaviors are enshrined in such rules; some individuals are subject to sanction while others are not. Social rules of conduct therefore provide everyone with a framework within which to live freely and make considered decisions. Nevertheless, despite this degree of freedom, such questions arise as "how true is this?" or "why is it true?" The sub-branch of philosophy that answers such questions is "ethics," which provides us with guidance about good and bad, profit and loss, right and wrong (Cohan 2002).

O'Shaughnessy (2001) argues that politics is concerned with the affirmation of values by politicians and voting for a particular party has historically been an expression not only of acceptance or rejection of those values but also of an individuals' social identity. He asserts that, for this reason, a political issue or platform should not be treated only as a product to be traded, but rather as a symbol that will evoke the individual's feelings about his or her own values. In his view, political views and political decisions are thus part of the socially constructed self. Indeed, from the political marketer's perspective, a sentimental appeal to values can be more effective than other more pragmatic approaches to communication.

Machiavellianism and Political Ethics

A character trait allowing an individual to behave in ways that others would think unethical or amoral is termed "Machiavellism," in reference to the Florentine renaissance philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527), whose name is a byword for political intrigue. This reputation rests solely on his posthumously published work, *The Prince*, which contributed significantly to political theory by postulating the setting of realistic ground rules that separated political decision making from the ideal-world constraints of moral scruples. Specifically, Machiavelli discussed the attributes of the "new prince" who might free the Republic of Florence from the external threats it faced and allow its people to live in harmony and unity, which he could do only by breaking promises and practicing deception in the process (Güngör 2009; Bloodgood, Turnley, and Mudrack 2010).

Discussing *The Prince*, Galie and Bopst (2006) emphasize its separation of ethics from politics, in arguing that everything is allowable in the interest of effective government and that political life and private life are different in terms of the extent of the influence of morals. According to this doctrine, a politician who resorts to violence and employs subterfuge in private negotiations is considered to be behaving normally, not immorally. Though the apparent purpose of *The Prince* was to teach rulers how to take power and hold on to

it, the ultimate objective was to give the people steady and powerful government, far removed from the medieval norms of insurrection and invasion, not for the ruler's personal benefit but for the public good (Güngör 2009).

Cohan (2002) selects a summarizing extract from *The Prince*:

> "Any person who decides in every situation to act as a good man is bound to he destroyed in the company of so many men who are not good. Wherefore, [if you desire to stay in power] one must learn how to be not good, and must avail oneself of that ability, or not, as the occasion requires" (p. 278).
>
> He elaborates by distilling the following five specific principles:
>
> "Machiavelli observed that: (1) In society the reality is that distrust and intolerance prevail, taking precedence over 'what ought to be.' (2) In public life, ethics translates into expedience and practicality. (3) There are no absolutes in the ethics of public life. (4) Being 'virtuous' just means being successful in manifesting your political agenda; that is, success implies being powerful. (5) The Prince must appear to be filled with sympathy and trust, and seem to be humane, honest and religious, and indeed actually be so, and yet, when necessary, he must be mentally ready not to practice these virtues, ready, in a word, to do the opposite, and to do the opposite with class and skill" (p. 278).

Machiavelli thus asserted that personal ethics and professional demands remained by and large in conflict with one another and advised his readers to distinguish between private and public acts (Cohan 2002). The realistic and skeptical manner later seen in political affairs was undoubtedly based on his experiences, because he had learnt to set aside all behavioral motives except ambiguity and selfishness (Güngör 2009). *The Prince*, as a prescription for the maintenance of power, suggests specific strategy, tactics, and behavior that lead to political success. Individuals who achieve their political ends amorally, without applying ethical and moral standards, are thus called "Machiavellian" in everyday speech and said to be adopting Machiavellianism in academic studies, for example, by McGuire and Hutchings (2006).

Though *The Prince* was written as treatise on the exercise of power, particularly political power, some authors have sought to apply the concept of Machiavellian behavior to marketers, consumers, information technologists, and ordinary individuals (Singhapakdi 1993, Van Kenhove et al. 2001, Winter, Stylianou, and Giacalone 2004, Bloodgood et al. 2010, Harris 2010). Given that every individual is also a consumer and every consumer potentially a voter (Peng and Hackley 2009), it is intuitively reasonable to apply Machiavellianism to the behavior of voters exercising their personal power to contribute to the success or failure of a political party.

Singhapakdi (1993) defined Machiavellianism as a general strategy that individuals employ when they feel they can manipulate other people in their personal relationships. It also manifests itself as the desire for clear, definite

knowledge to guide perception and action, as opposed to the undesirable alternative of ambiguity and confusion. Van Kenhove et al. (2001) describe Machiavellianism as a "negative epithet," indicating an amoral way of dealing with others in pursuit of one's own objectives; the more Machiavellian one is, the less ethical.

Winter et al. (2004) described Machiavellian behavior as a dispositional tendency affecting ethical decision making, an immoral approach that ignores the needs and rights of other people and a general interpersonal strategy of employing devious, manipulative tactics for personal benefit. In their view of the phenomenon, individuals high on the Machiavellianism scale see nothing wrong in stealing, cheating, or lying in their self-interest and lean more toward decisions suggested by unethical others than toward those proffered by ethical individuals. They "manipulate more, win more, are persuaded less, [and] persuade others more . . ."

Bloodgood et al. (2010) describe Machiavellianism as an aspect of individual distinctiveness, focused on the extent to which individuals hold cynical views of human nature, behave manipulatively in their interactions with others, and generally have low standards of morality compared with tradition and convention:

> "Although it may not be the goal of individuals high in Machiavellianism to engage in unethical acts as an end to themselves, the amoral nature of Machiavellianism can result in unethical behavior as a byproduct. A high Mach individual is one who focuses on his or her own self-interest while disregarding the societal acceptability of their actions, while a low Mach is one who places little emphasis on self-interest and takes into account the acceptability of his or her actions. In general, prior research suggests that high Machs tend to be more accepting of ethically questionable behavior and tend to behave less ethically than low Machs in some situations Indeed, some researchers have found a link between Machiavellianism and unethical behavior. For example, high Machs have been found to have a higher tolerance for various forms of theft, cheating, lying, and so on. High Machs have been found to be more likely to use impression management tactics in ways that are self-serving and intentionally deceptive" (p. 26).

Harris (2001) argues that, though it is popular to treat Machiavellian methods as immoral, that is facile and wrong. Machiavelli never suggested that amoral behavior was normal, he asserts, but in fact argued that individuals should generally behave in accordance with the morals of their times. To aim to be virtuous at all times would not be practical, however, because the individual who did so would be at a disadvantage among so many others who did not. As a general rule, a "prince" should display the virtues of mercy, truthfulness, humanity, honesty, and religiosity; in short, he should behave in a moral way. Harris thus concludes that, according to Machiavellian principles, amoral behavior is applicable and appropriate in a limited range

of situations, such as threats to the independence of state. Machiavellianism can be either public or private. One mode should not be considered superior to the other on account of its moral value, unless there is a conflict between the two. Walle (2001) also seeks to interpret the message of *The Prince*, seeing it as being concerned with kinds of amoral attitudes, strategies, and tactics, effective in themselves without the application of ethical and moral standards, which contribute to the achievement of success.

Galie and Bopst (2006) contend that Machiavelli has never gone out of fashion, since power has also never been out of fashion, and his precepts regarding power and leadership remaining valid after more than 500 years as reformulated and reinterpreted by today's managers and strategists. Mudrack (1994) has reinterpreted the studies which find that older people are more Machiavellian. McGuire and Hutchings (2006) use a Machiavellian framework to build a model of organizational change in which the "drivers, enablers, or inhibitors" are power, leaders, and teams; reward and discipline systems; and the actors' norms and values.

Rawwas, Swaidan, and Oyman (2005) report the development by Christie and Geis in 1970 of the "Mach IV" instrument for the measurement of Machiavellianism as a distinct personality construct, which was based on the precepts articulated in *The Prince*, in the context of power behaviors in an organization. It consists of 20 items, such as the detachedness of those in power, the confidentiality characterizing their daily work, and their manipulative influence behind the scenes. The measurement scale has since been applied in the fields of banking, accounting, ecology, gender management, health services, science, industry, and marketing. However, Machiavellianism should not be treated as a unitary construct, according to Rawwas et al. (2005), because of its limited usefulness in the complicated structure of organizations. Instead, it should be divided into high and low manifestations of the phenomenon. As the same authors put it: "high Machiavellians manipulate more, win more, are persuaded less, and otherwise differ significantly from low Machiavellians." Less Machiavellian individuals take account of the interests of others by focusing more on the long-term purposes of their actions; they may be emotionally detached individuals who are less connected in their relationships with others, but they are not "dishonest." Harris (2010) has very recently asserted that the application of Machiavelli to management research needs to be updated to fit the idiosyncracies of contemporary buiness and consumer cultures.

Van Kenhove et al. (2001) used the Mach IV scale and the Muncy-Vitell Consumer Ethics Scale to study the relationships among ethical beliefs, ideology, political preference, and the necessity to lessen cognitive uncertainty among Dutch-speaking Belgians. The results show that individuals who needed greater certainty have more ethical beliefs than others who needed less. Rawwas (1996) studied the relationships among Machiavellianism, ideology, and ethical beliefs among Austrian consumers, finding that they judged whether or not a behavior was ethical by taking consequences and outcomes

into account, rather than moral rules. Rawwas et al. (2005) later found, in a cross-cultural study, that Turkish consumers were less Machiavellian than their American counterparts. Richmond (2001) found, in a study of decision making among students of accountancy, that those who agreed more strongly with Machiavellian statements were significantly more likely to agree with unethical actions depicted in three scenarios than those who agreed less strongly. These studies collectively demonstrate that Machiavellian behaviors are not only related to the power ploys of politicians but also determined by individual behavioral characteristics.

Idealism and Relativism

The factors and influences that shape individuals' moral philosophy and affect their responses to ethically intense situations are the subject matter of ethics position theory (EPT), developed by Forsyth (1980) to explain the variations in individuals' moral judgments and the ethical positions they adopt. EPT emphasizes two dimensions in particular, each capable of being measured on a 10-item scale: *idealism* describes the concern that a chosen behavior or opinion will be "proper," with benign outcomes; *relativism* focuses on the possible social consequences of actions and opinions (Forsyth, O'Boyle, and McDaniel 2008; Van Kenhove et al. 2001).

To put this another way, idealists may be expected to be faithful to generally accepted moral rules in developing their ethical judgments. They think it possible to get a "good result" for everyone by behaving in accord with moral rules and will avoid behaviors that can harm others. Relativists, on the other hand, evaluate moral behavior individually, according to their view of the circumstances, and so may be skeptical about supposedly inviolate moral principles or even reject them entirely. As Marques and Azevedo-Pereira (2009) put it, idealism reflects the importance of the effect of one's decisions on the welfare of others, while relativism is concerned with the possibility of not accepting universal moral rules. Forsyth's 10-item idealism and relativism scales respectively measure the extent of an individual's conformity to or rejection of generally accepted moral rules and principles. Vitell and Paolillo (2003) argue that judgments and opinions of relatively idealistic individuals are more likely to call for consumer behavior to be generally "ethical" than those of their more relativistic counterparts.

Those who score highly on the idealism scale generally believe that their actions must have positive consequences and that it is wrong to take a stance that might have outcomes unwanted by others. Less idealistic individuals, on the other hand, do not believe that their actions must always yield positive results, assuming that unintended consequences can sometimes be necessary if the actions are to be successful. Those who are highly rated on the relativism scale do not aspire to perfect ethics but prefer to believe that what is ethical depends upon the prevailing circumstances and human nature. Less

relativist individuals, by contrast, do seek to behave in accordance with universal moral principles, traditions, and rules, all other things being equal.

Rawwas (1996) has argued that an action is "right," regardless of its idealistic or relativistic origin, if it brings about more positive outcomes for everyone concerned than other available alternatives would. Van Kenhove et al. (2001), however, suggest that relativism can be considered as the denial of generally approved ethical behaviors or the rejection of universal ethical principles, focusing as it does on the determining function of time, place, and culture. In particular, relativists believe that the whole structure of ethical standards is anchored in the culture in which it exists. On this basis, a previously nonexistent set of rules could be formulated to predict an individual's adherence to generally approved ethical rules in deciding "what is right or wrong for all people" (Rawwas et al. 2005), in the context of personal voting choices.

Forsyth (1980) argued that individuals' levels of idealism and relativism jointly determine their moral choices, rather than universal ethical principles. He defined the following four ethical classifications on the basis of the idealism-relativism balance, which have since been generally adopted (Forsyth 1980; Forsyth et al. 2008; Marques and Azevedo-Pereira 2009; Van Kenhove et al. 2001):

- *Situationists*, who score highly on both relativism and idealism, do not accept universal ethic principles but do believe in the obligation to act in a way that has positive consequences for society in general. Rejecting moral rules, they nevertheless take account of the probable results of behavior and behave accordingly. Such individuals may employ deception as a route to what they see as the best results.
- *Subjectivists*, characterized by high relativism and low idealism, base their moral deductions on personal feelings and disregard moral rules. They neither accept universal moral principles nor prioritize behaviors that would create positive results for everyone concerned. Actions that could harm others might be ethical from the subjectivist point of view, in that they would support personal judgments with respect to winning or losing. Subjectivists accept the inevitability of occasional negative outcomes.
- *Absolutists*, characterized by low relativism and high idealism, see positive results are the reflection of absolute conformity to traditions and rules and that the actions they accordingly take must be ethical. Such individuals believe that their behavior ought to bring about positive results for all concerned through the acceptance of universal ethical principles. They have a tendency to be sensitive, especially when actions harm others or universal ethic principles are violated.
- *Exceptionists*, whose relativism and idealism scores are both low, believe in the necessity of obedience to ethical principles. Like absolutists, however, they recognize that negative consequences cannot be avoided altogether and reject universal ethical rules. The low level of idealism in

such individuals permits them to balance the positive and negative consequences of an action, pragmatically, even to the extent of accepting that one can be personally disadvantaged for the sake of other people. Their philosophy is that ethical principles are useful as a framework for behavioral choices and their preference is to act in such a way as to create more positive consequences for all parties.

The characteristics of these ethical groups are summarized in Figure 1. Its originator, Vermeir (2003), locates the four types of individuals in a 4×4 matrix defined by intersecting scales measuring their degree pragmatism versus idealism and individualism versus universalism.

The "ethical ideology" framework originated by Forsyth (1980) has been employed in many studies to classify the ethical predispositions of various social groups. Some have used it to compare the ethical beliefs of consumers in two or more countries, others to investigate variations within a single country or culture. Van Kenhove et al. (2001), for example, employed Forsyth's measure among others in their transnational investigation of the relationships among consumers' ethical beliefs, ethical ideology, Machiavellianism, political preference, and "need for closure." The general finding has been that idealism and relativism combine with higher and lower ethical principles respectively (Steenhaut and van Kenhove 2006).

Forsyth's Ethics Position Questionnaire (EPQ) has been applied to the measurement of the effects of personal idealism and relativity on ethical decisions and moral intentions by Vitell and Singhapakdi (1993), Marques and

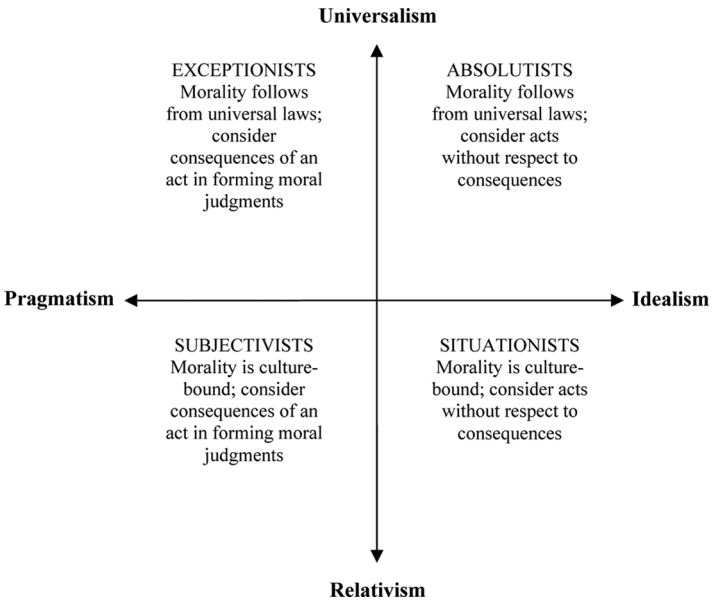

FIGURE 1 Typology of ethical behaviors.

Azevedo-Pereira (2009), Van Kenhove et al. (2001), and Rawwas (1996). Research focused on marketing ethics, in particular, has found that perceiving the moral problem is the first step in the process of ethical decision making (Ferrell and Gresham 1985; Hunt and Vitell 1986). The former study concluded that ethical problems are posed by the social and cultural environment and that personal and cultural factors shape the decision makers' perception of those problems. The general theory of marketing ethics articulated by Hunt and Vitell (1986) confirms that the recognition of an ethical problem is an important impetus for the process of ethical decision making.

A study by Rawwas et al. (2005), which made the working assumption that Turkish consumers would be more idealist and less relativist than their American counterparts, found that they did indeed score higher on idealism but that the difference between two nationalities in terms of relativism was not meaningful. Steenhaut and van Kenhove (2006) concluded that the effects of idealism and relativism on the judgment that consumer practices were unethical would be respectively positive and negative. Relativism would have a negative effects on the judgment of non-ethical consumer practices. Marques and Azevedo-Pereira (2009) found that chartered accountants who scored highly on absolutism and idealism made significantly stricter "ethical judgments" than their less absolutist or idealist counterparts. The evidence was weak, however, for any relationship between their levels of relativism and more lenient judgments. Variations in ethical ideology and relativist-idealist thinking were reflected in the age, gender, and education level of the participants in their study.

Iyer et al. (2010a) found that "libertarians" score moderately lower than "liberals" and slightly lower than "conservatives" on moral idealism; they also score moderately higher than conservatives but slightly lower than liberals on moral relativism. These results show, according to Forsyth's (1980) classification system, those individuals who are high in relativism and low on idealism (the pattern for libertarians) are "subjectivists" who "reject moral rules" and "base moral judgments on personal feelings about the action and the setting." The study further found subjectivists to be more lenient in judging individuals who violate moral norms (Iyer et al. 2010a).

Van Kenhove et al. (2001) connected the notion of Machiavellianism and voting preference with idealism and relativism, in the context of individual personalities and beliefs, by suggesting that there will be a significant correlation between ethical ideology and political preferences and advancing other hypothesis relating to the human need for "closure."

METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study was to determine the effect of voters' ethical characteristics on their voting tendencies to the political left, right, or center by analysis of the data collected in a survey of voters who voted in Nigde province in the 2007 Turkish general election (for members of parliament).

The proposed structural model, relating voting tendency to the personal characteristics of idealism, relativism, and Machiavellianism, is shown in Figure 2. The measurement of the independent variables idealism and relativism was by the EPQ scale, and of Machiavellianism by the Mach IV scale, both described in the previous sections. The voting tendency variable was measured on an 8-point rating scale anchored at 1 = extreme left-wing and 8 = extreme right-wing (8).

> "The original Mach IV scale consisted of 71 items based upon the writings of Niccolo Machiavelli adapted from *The Prince* and *The Discourses*. An item analysis indicated the ten highest-related items in favor of Machiavellian statements, and the ten highest-related items not in favor of Machiavellian statements, resulting in a total of twenty statements comprising the scale. The 20-items are scored on a 7-point Likert scale ("agree strongly" being scored 7, "no opinion" 4, and "disagree strongly" 1). A constant of 20 was added to the calculation so that scores range from 40 points (most ethical) to 160 points (least ethical), with a neutral score of 100 points" (Richmond 2001, p. 13).
>
> "There are little literature extended into the political domain with regard to Idealism and relativism. The Ethics Position Questionnaire is a 20-item scale composed of two 10-item subscales measuring moral idealism and moral relativism. Idealism reflects the extent to which a concern for the welfare of others is at the heart of an individual's moral code (e.g.,"People should make certain that their actions never intentionally harm another even to a small degree."). Relativism concerns whether or not an individual believes that moral principles are universal (e.g., "What is ethical varies from one situation and society to another."). The scale is commonly used in the business ethics literature and has been shown to predict immoral behavior in ethical situations" (Iyer et al. 2010b, p. 9–10).
>
> Iyer et al. (2010a) discuss how voters' personalities and moral concerns may interact with media portrayals of the candidates consistent with recent congruency models of political preference. "The 20-item scale is a measure of moral idealism (e.g., "It is never necessary to sacrifice the welfare of others.") and moral relativism (e.g., "Questions of what is ethical for everyone can never be resolved since what is moral or immoral is up to the individual."). Relative preference for Clinton over Obama was uniquely predicted by higher scores on moral relativism. This suggests that relative preference for Obama may be related to the idea that morals are absolute, while relative preference for Clinton may be related to the idea that right and wrong may vary depending on the situation" (p. 301).

Van Kenhove, Vermeir, and Verniers (2000) surveyed of the relationships between consumers' ethical beliefs, ethical ideology, Machiavellianism, political preference and the individual difference variable "need for closure."

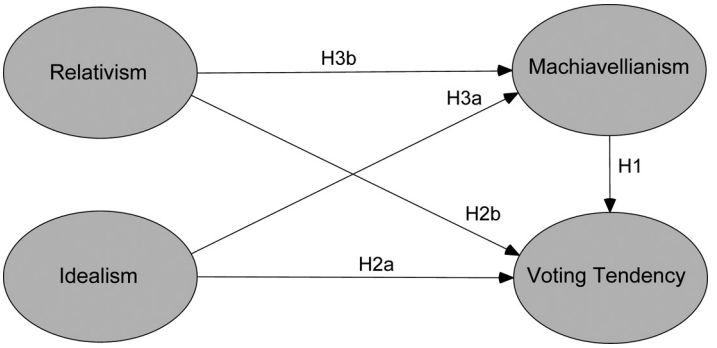

FIGURE 2 Structural model.

Many works in the literature examine Machiavellian doctrines in a contemporary context, and the literature view demonstrates clearly that studies appraising the relationship between political ethics and Machiavellianism are not enough in themselves. From this perspective, Hypothesis 1 is framed to in terms of the relationship between Machiavellianism and the political preferences of voters:

H1: Voting tendencies are affected by a voter's personal Machiavellianism.

In our study, a second hypothesis was developed to test the relationship between the ethical characteristics and voting tendencies (left, right, or center) of voters in a Turkish parliamentary election, as follows:

H2a: Voting tendencies are affected by personal idealism.

H2b: Voting tendencies are affected by personal relativism.

A third hypothesis related to the relationship of personal Machiavellian characteristics to idealist and relativist frames of reference, in the context of political voting:

H3a: Voters' idealism is related to personal Machiavellianism.

H3b: Voters' relativism is related to personal Machiavellianism.

Sampling Procedure

The sampling frame was approximately 65,000 citizens of Niğde City in Turkey who voted in a national election in July 2007, (Eriş, 2009). The appropriate sample size was calculated by the formula devised by Salant and Dillman (1994), which is:

$$n = Nt^2pq/d^2(N-1) + t^2pq$$

where n=sample size; N=number of individuals in frame; p = frequency of the phenomenon under study; q = 100 minus p, percent;

t = value obtained from the t-table at the required level of statistical significance; d = confidence level.

In a multistage sampling design, purposive sampling first determined 22 sampling points within a universe including every district of Niğde province. In late 2008, an overall total of 500 street interviews were conducted at those sampling points. Table 1 shows the demographic profile of respondents interviewed.

Measurement of Constructs

The design of the five-part questionnaire for administration to the sample drew upon precedents in the literature (Forsyth 1980; Forsyth et al. 2008; van Kenhove et al. 2001; Vermeir 2003).

In the first part, the Machiavellianism construct was measured by the long-established Mach IV instrument, used by Van Kenhove et al. (2001) in a study of relationships among ethical beliefs, ideology, political preference, and the need for closure. In our study, respondents' level of Machiavellianism was rated on a set of 5-point Likert scales adapted from that source. The second and third parts of the questionnaire measured the relativism and idealism constructs by means of Forsyth's EPQ described earlier. In this instrument, respondents evaluate a series of statements on a 9-point scale of agreement. Statements related to idealism include "A person should make certain that their actions never intentionally harm another even to a small degree" and

TABLE 1 Characteristics of the Sample

		%
Gender	Male	45.8
	Female	54.2
Age	18–25	14.0
	26–35	31.4
	36–45	23.2
	46–55	21.2
	55–65	6.2
	Over 65	4.0
Education	Primary school	15.8
	Secondary school	24.6
	College or university	54.2
	Postgraduate	5.4
Occupation	Manager	14.4
	Manual or office worker	7.6
	Tradesperson	5.8
	Teacher	28.4
	Student	6.2
	Housewife	11.6
	Retired	9.2
	Unemployed	4.0
	Other	12.8

"If an action could harm an innocent other, then it should not be done"; those relating to relativism include "Different types of moralities cannot be compared as to rightness" and "What is ethical varies from one situation and society to another." In the fourth part, 8-point semantic differential scales measured respondents' general political orientation by asking them to say where they saw themselves on the political spectrum and how they would normally vote, answering on an 8-point rating scale offering positions defined as "radical," "moderate," or unqualified "left" or "right," plus "center" and an apolitical "neutral" option. The finding was that 40% of the 436 inclined to the right, 24% to the left, and 13% to the center. A further 23% were "neutral," in the sense that they did not identify themselves as being aligned with the political left, right, or center. Within both the right-leaning and left-leaning groups, an unqualified "right" or "left" was the dominant answer, outnumbering "radical" and "moderate" combined. Valid answers were obtained from 436 interviewees, an 87% response rate.

Last, questions in the fifth part of the questionnaire recorded respondents' demographic characteristics.

Table 2 displays the mean values, standard deviations, and Cronbach alpha coefficients for the Machiavellianism, idealism, relativism, and political tendencies left, right, or center scales, based on data collected from 500 voters. In this context, measurement of the internal consistency of the Machiavellianism factor yielded a Cronbach's alpha value of only 0.66. Examination of the individual values found that 13, 18, 19, and 20 reduced the overall reliability and negatively affected internal consistency of the data. Those items were therefore deleted from the table and the analysis was repeated. As a result, the reliability of the Machiavellianism factor rose to an acceptable alpha value of 0.76. The alpha values of 0.76 (with one item deleted), 0.86, and 0.81 suggest that the reliability test results for the idealism and relativism factors are both acceptable. The respondents' mean scores for all three constructs cover a narrow range, from 3.35 to 3.75 around the midpoint of the 5-point Likert scales, with standard deviations ranging from 0.59 to 0.75.

Table 3 shows that the voters who participated in survey agree most strongly with the statements relating to the idealism construct and are neutral with respect to those relating to relativism and Machiavellianism. The small standard deviations shown in Table 3 shows confirm that the range of respondents' opinions was narrow.

TABLE 2 Construct Reliability

Construct	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
Machiavellianism	20	0.66
Idealism	10	0.87
Relativism	10	0.81

TABLE 3 Description Statistics

Construct	Mean*	Standard deviation
Machiavellianism	3.35	0.59
Idealism	3.75	0.75
Relativism	3.37	0.70

Note. *5-point Likert scale in which 1 = disagree strongly, 3 = no opinion, and 5 = agree strongly.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The research hypotheses were tested by regression analysis, with the results presented in Tables 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Hypothesis 1, that *voting tendency is affected by personal Machiavellianism,* was tested by regression analysis, with the outcomes presented in Tables 4, 5, and 6. Table 4 shows an *F*-ratio that is not significant with respect to Machiavellianism, idealism and relativism with voting tendency while is significant for idealism, Machiavellianism and relativism, Machiavellianism at the .05 level. The *R* value of zero in Table 5 further demonstrates that there is no significant correlation between respondents' mean scores with respect to their Machiavellianism and their voting tendency. Table 6 shows that B = .008 divided by the standard error value of .210 yields a rounded *t* value of 0.04, which is not significant at the .05 level. Hypothesis 1 is therefore rejected.

The outcomes of regression testing of Hypothesis 2a and 2b, that *voters' idealism and relativism will affect their voting tendencies*, are presented in Tables 4, 5, and 6. Table 4 shows an *F* ratio that is not significant at the .05 level, while the standardized coefficients of 0.02 and 0.04 in Table 6 and the *R* value of 0.02 and 0.04 in Table 5 confirm that there is no significant correlation between respondents' *voting tendencies* and the mean scores for their personal idealism or relativism. Table 5 shows that the R^2 results for this regression model are 0.001 and 0.002. Table 6 shows that B = .007 divided by the standard error value of .013 yields a rounded *t* value of .52, and B = .13

TABLE 4 ANOVA

	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean square	*F* value	Significance
Machiavellianism*: regression discrepancy	.006	1	.006	.002	.96
Idealism*: Regression discrepancy	1.28	1	1.28	.27	.60
Relativism* regression discrepancy	4.13	1	4.13	.88	.35
Idealism, Machiavellianism: regression discrepancy	92.89	1	92.89	244.10	.00
Relativism, Machiavellianism: regression discrepancy	48.54	1	48.54	124.21	.00

Note. *Dependent variable = voting tendencies.

TABLE 5 Summary of Model

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Standard Error
Machiavellianism*	.002	.000	−.002	2.17
Idealism*	.023	.001	−.001	2.17
Relativism*	.042	.002	.00	2.17
**Machiavellianism	.57	.33	.33	.62
***Machiavellianism	.45	.20	.20	.63

Note. **Predictors: constant; dependent variable = voting tendencies. **Predictors: constant; dependent variable = idealism. ***Predictors: constant; dependent variable = relativism.

TABLE 6 Coefficients

	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
Model	B	Standard error	beta	t value	Significance
Constant	5.41	.71		7.68	.00
Machiavellianism*	.008	.21	.002	.04	.97
Constant	5.18	.49		10.52	.00
Idealism*	.007	.013	.023	.52	.60
Constant	5.00	.48		10.43	.000
Relativism*	.13	.14	.04	.94	.35
Constant	1.30	.16		8.16	.00
Machiavellianism**	.73	.05	.57	15.62	.00
Constant	1.61	.16		10.00	.00
Machiavellianism***	.53	.05	.45	11.15	.00

Note. *Dependent variable: voting tendencies. **Dependent variable idealism. ***Dependent variable: relativism.

divided by the standard error of .14 gives a t test result of .94. Neither of these is significant at the .05 level, and both hypotheses are therefore rejected.

The two-part Hypothesis 3a/3b posits that *voters' personal idealism and relativism are both related directly to their Machiavellianism*. The results of multiple regression analysis are presented in Tables 4, 5, and 6. The F ratio shown in Table 4 is significant at the .05 level. The R coefficients of .57 and .45 and R^2 coefficients of .33 and .20 in Table 5 demonstrate the significant correlation between respondents' personal idealism and relativism and the mean scores for their personal Machiavellianism. In Table 6, dividing B = .73 by .05 and B = .53 by .05 yields t values of 15.62 and 11.15, respectively, both of which are significant at the .05 level. Both hypotheses are therefore supported.

TABLE 7 Summary of Model

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Standard Error
Machiavellianism, idealism, relativism	.046	.002	−.004	2.171

Note. Predictors: constant; Machiavellianism, idealism, relativism dependent variable = voting tendencies.

TABLE 8 Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
	B	Standard error	beta	*t* value	Significance
Constant	4.26	.57		7.43	.00
Machiavellianism	−.03	.18	−.01	−.18	.86
İdealism	−.03	.15	−.01	−.19	.85
Relativism	.10	.14	.04	.69	.49

Note. Dependent variable: voting tendencies.

Although the significance values in Tables 4, 5, and 6 suggest that there is no clear relationship between voting tendencies and Machiavellianism, idealism and relativism while there is relationship between Machiavellianism and idealism, and also between Machiavellianism and relativism.

Table 7 shows that the R^2 results for this regression model are 0.002. The coefficients in Table 8 were examined for an indication of the collective effect of the three variables on *voting tendencies*, by means of this multiple regression equation:

$$\textit{Voting tendency} = 4.3 - 0.03\ \textit{Machiavellianism} - 0.03\ \textit{idealism} + 0.10\ \textit{relativism}$$

The outcome, shown in Table 8, demonstrates that respondents' *voting tendency* was most strongly affected by their degree of relativism (regression coordinate = 0.1), followed by their Machiavellianism (−.03) and the level of their idealism (−.03).

Table 9 presents the relationships among respondents' mean scores for Machiavellianism, relativism, and idealism: that there are statistically significant positive correlations among the three variables.

The responses of our respondents to the statements in Forsyth's EPQ, which was devised to deduce possible explanations of variation in individuals' ethical judgments as ethical philosophy, demonstrate a positive linear

TABLE 9 Pearson Correlations

Model	Machiavellianism	Idealism	Relativism
Machiavellianism:			
Pearson correlation	1.0	.57	.45
meaningfulness		.00	.00
Idealism			
Pearson correlation	.57	1.0	.47
meaningfulness	.00		.00
Relativism			
Pearson correlation	.45	.47	1.0
meaningfulness	.00	.00	

relationship linking both idealism and relativism to Machiavellianism. They thus support the theoretical proposition of (Van Kenhove et al. 2001) that "the more Machiavellian a person is, the less ethical he or she will be." The literature suggests that individuals with higher scores on the Machiavellian scale tend to be more deceitful, less moral, more indifferent to societal needs, and more manipulative (Richmond 2001). The positive linear relationship linking both idealism and relativism to Machiavellianism supports the appropriateness of the Mach IV scale for measurement of voter's ethics characteristics.

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The objective of this study was to assess the effects of voters' ethical characteristics on their political inclination to the political left, right, or center in the context of public elections in a city in Turkey in mid-2007. Those beliefs were measured by three of the available scales of ethical behavior, which assess an individual's level of Machiavellianism, idealism, and relativism. Voting tendencies were established by asking respondents to say where they saw themselves on the political spectrum and how they would normally vote—left, right, or center—using the 8-point rating scale described in the Methodology section.

We found, first, that our respondent-voters' mean rating for Machiavellianism on the 5-point EPQ scale was 3.35; for idealism, it was 3.75; and for relativism, 3.37. Since these scores all fall within the "neither agree nor disagree" range of the Likert scale, it can be concluded that the dependence on generally approved ethical principles in forming ethical judgments exhibited by the voters in the sample is exactly in the middle of the possible range. The range of scores on the three scales shows that the voters in the sample were neutral, while idealism is higher than Machiavellianism and relativism, on average, with respect to all three measures of their ethical dispositions. In other words, respondents did not have any marked sympathy for the statements in the questionnaire that reflected dominantly relativist or Machiavellian philosophies (nor were they notably unsympathetic to them). With regard to the voters' ethical frames of reference, idealism was found to be higher, at an average score of 3.75. They could be characterized as *absolutist* on the basis of their low relativism and high idealism.

Multiple regression analysis found no statistically significant relationships between respondents' political preferences and their levels of Machiavellianism, idealism, and relativism, though there were statistically significant relationships among those levels themselves. This result is consistent with the finding of Van Kenhove et al. (2001).

Our study has found no relationship between ethics and political orientation: Right-leaning voters were no more ethical than their left-leaning

counterparts and vice versa. Political parties adhering to either of those beliefs could cause their own parties to lose the support of voters who felt demeaned by the negative nature of their promotional messages. It might therefore be recommended that the print and broadcast media, political commentators, and the public at large should be more temperate in their judgments with regard to voters' personal ethics.

The most important limitation of our study is that it was confined to just one province of Turkey. If its findings are to be generalized with any confidence, future studies will need to range more widely. A further limitation is that the fieldwork was confined to the Niğde Province of Turkey, on account of the inevitable constraints of a limited budget and timescale for the study. It would be useful to explore the relationships among relativism, idealism, and Machiavellianism in a wider context than a single Turkish election and voters in one geographical area and thereby begin to be able to generalize about this interesting aspect of consumers as voters.

Though there have been many separate studies of political ethics, ethical behavior, and personal Machiavellianism, only four of which we are aware have dealt with all three in a single context (Van Kenhove et al. 2001; Vermier 2003; Winter et al. 2004). It is therefore recommended that future studies should replicate ours, preferably in different settings, with the specific aim of plotting relationships among personal ethics, positioning on the Mach IV scale and political preferences, and comparing the outcomes with the findings reported here.

Although there have been discussions of idealism, relativism, and Machiavellianism in the marketing literature, theoretical studies relating those ethical characteristics of voters to their voting tendencies are scarce, and few of them employ EPQ or Mach IV, It is therefore expected that our methodology will support future empirical studies and that our findings will be taken into account in the formualtion of political marketing strategy in the future.

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FURTHER READING

The following published papers deal with topics that are relevant to individuals' ethical frameworks and political preferences, but not sufficiently specific to the topic of this paper to merit inclusion in the literature review. The synopses that follow are in chronological order.

Hunt, S. D., and L. B. Chonko. (1984). Marketing and Machiavellianism. Journal of Marketing *48: 30–42.*

These authors noted that Christie and Geis had developed their Mach IV scale after observing that the personal beliefs of many leaders who controlled the behavior of others by manipulative means seemed to coincide with the principles articulated by Machiavelli in *The Prince* and the *Discourses*. Many leaders proved to exhibit a lack of affect in interpersonal relationships, of concern with conventional morality, and of ideological commitment; in general, they displayed "gross psychopathology." The Mach IV scale was therefore developed to measure a characteristic summed up as Machiavellianism. Its application led them to the conclusion that individuals who scored low or high on their measurement scale were detectably different from one another in their behavior and characteristics. Specifically, "high Machs manipulate more, win more, are persuaded less, persuade others more, and otherwise differ significantly from low Machs" in situations in which they interact face to face with others, are given latitude for improvisation, and are distracted by affective involvement that is irrelevant to winning. Hunt and Chonko then considered that marketing might be a Machiavellian discipline, concluding that such personal characteristics were not generally necessary for success in marketing management but were a positive factor in males with high levels of formal education.

Thomas, M. J. (2000). Princely thoughts on Machiavelli, marketing and management. European Journal of Marketing *34(5/6): 524–537.*

This author reflected on Machiavellian characteristics in practicing managers before concluding that "loyalty is the key to success in marketing . . . capitalism will fail unless it retains the loyalty of customers and of its many potential stakeholders."

Walle, H. A. (2001). *Machiavelli, humanistic empiricism and marketing research*. Management Decision *39(5): 403–406.*

Referring to *The Prince* (1513), this author describes Machiavelli's basic premise as being that a ruler should not feel bound by traditional ethics and

moral dictates and by extension that any strategist should be concerned merely with gaining and maintaining power; a preoccupation with any other concern is ultimately a form of weakness. Amoral attitudes, strategies, and tactics thus help to secure success. Today, "Machiavellian" defines managers who deploy amoral or immoral techniques when it is expedient to do so.

Moss, J. (2005). Race effects on the employee assessing political leadership: A review of Christie and Geis (1970) Mach IV measure of Machiavellianism. Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies *11(2): 26–33*.

Moss notes that Christie developed the Mach IV scale in 1970 when he was a fellow at the Center for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences. It was intended to measure the *political personality orientation* of leaders in organizations, "Mach" standing for Machiavellianism, and had not been revised since then. She explains that Christie and Geis defined political personality as "a disposition in which formal and informal power is used to control and/or manipulate others," and duly came to realize that many individuals in formal leadership positions were ineffective in political tactics and inflexible in their behavior; their extreme positions did not allow them to make compromises necessary for political success.

Shafer, W. E., and R. S. Simmons. (2008). Social responsibility, Machiavellianism and tax avoidance: A study of Hong Kong tax professionals. Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal *21(5): 695–720*.

These researchers studied the effects of tax professionals' attitudes toward the perceived importance of corporate ethics and social responsibility as well as their Machiavellianism on their willingness to participate in the aggressive tax avoidance schemes of corporate clients. They found a significant cause-effect relationship, in that highly Machiavellian characters were more likely to endorse the traditional "stockholder view" of corporate responsibility (that corporations have little responsibility beyond maximizing their profits) than the "stakeholder view" (recognizing corporate responsibility to a broader range of potential stakeholders). The stockholder view mediated the relationship between Machiavellianism and judgments about ethical and social responsibility.