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THE EFFECT OF RURAL, URBAN UPBRINGING ON THE "MACHIAVELLIAN"  
ATTITUDES OF NIGERIAN CHILDREN

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Machiavellianism has been defined by Christie and Geis (1970) as a person's general strategy for dealing with people, especially the degree to which one feels others are manipulatable in inter-personal relations. A review of the existing literature of studies on machiavellian attitudes of children by Olasehinde (1973) has revealed that, among other clarifications, the genesis of machiavellian attitudes needed more detailed study. It was therefore the purpose of this investigation to find out the effect of locale of upbringing on the development of machiavellian attitudes of Yoruba children in the Western State of Nigeria. Studies by Krapf-Askari (1969) and Hake (1972) do show that residential patterns among the Yoruba are of urban-rural dichotomy. The various locales of upbringing in this study were those of urban and rural nature.

Aside from finding out the differential effect of urban and rural upbringing on children's manipulative behaviour, it was thought that a comparison of manipulateness among children in different societies, in different settings and in different parts of the same setting could potentially be very valuable for studies of socialization, value and attitude formation. In the same vein, the study of children's manipulateness could, more broadly, have implications for the relations between historical experience, contemporary social structure, social values and attitudes.

It would seem necessary to clarify what machiavellianism might mean in different societies and how it might be manifested. While Christie and Geis (1970) consider machiavellianism as the degree to which one feels others are manipulatable in interpersonal relations, Oksenberg (1971) working with

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Chinese children in Hong Kong, says that the words sly and deceitful are adjectives that adequately describe a machiavellian who is reputedly the master of the art of saying yes and meaning no. Touhey (1973) regards machiavellianism as a tendency to endorse the precepts of historical Machiavelli's writings. The studies by Bascom (1969) and Fadipe (1970) seem to highlight what machiavellianism means for the Yoruba. Bascom, quoting from the writings of Knolle, reports that the name Yoruba was originally given to the Oyo Yoruba by the Fulani of Northern Nigeria and it meant "cunning". Even today, there is a common expression in interpersonal relations among the Yoruba; that is "ma lo Yoruba fun mi" meaning, do not con me.

Fadipe for his part claims that "the Yoruba have a time-honoured tradition for equivocation, when occasion demands it". By equivocation, Fadipe means a lack of directness in speech and action which makes the Yoruba man to use non-committal expressions and words whose meanings are the reverse of what is meant. Fadipe gives this example of Yoruba equivocation "keep the red blood down in the system and spit out white saliva". Thus, for the purposes of this paper, machiavellianism would mean cunningness in speech and action and the skill in avoiding to get pinned down on what one says or does.

### Subjects

The sample consisted of 998 sixth grade pupils drawn by complex random sample technique from both urban and rural schools in the Western State of Nigeria. The sample comprised males and females with an age range of between 11.5 and 12.5 years. The urban and rural delimitations were based on the Nigerian national census of 1963. All the children in the study were of Yoruba parentage and had to have lived in either an urban or rural locale since their birth up until the time this study was carried out.

### Instruments

The instrument used was the Yoruba translation of the Kiddie Mach Scale as standardized by Christie and Geis (1970). The scale comprised 20 Likert-type format items for which there were no right or wrong answers. It approximated very closely to what machiavellianism would mean for the Yoruba children. The original instrument had to be translated into the children's mother tongue by a back translation technique to ensure Strauss's (1969) phenomenal identity and conceptual equivalences of measurement. The Yoruba version of the instrument yielded a reliability coefficient of .81 by split-half odd-even test correlations.

### Procedure

Data for this study were obtained by making the subjects respond to the 20 questionnaire items on the Kiddie Mach Scale. The questionnaire was administered on the subjects by the author, himself a Yoruba, who was involved in the back translation process of the instrument. Of the 20 items, ten indicated strong machiavellian orientations the responses to which were scored 5, 4, 2, 1 on each of the items' 4-step response scale. The other ten items indicated anti-machiavellian orientation with their responses scored in reverse. The total scores on all items were computed for each subject classified as urban or rural-bred.

The results were based on the total scores obtained by urban and rural children separately categorized into high or low machiavellian scorers depending on the overall mean score of 59.36 for the entire sample. The mean machiavellian score for the urban children was 68.00 while that of the rural children was 50.54. The results thus obtained were subjected to a one-way analysis of variance as reported in Table 1.

analysis of variance as reported in the Table. The results show very distinctly that urban upbringing contributed more to Yoruba children's machiavellian attitudes than rural upbringing. The main effect of differences between urban and rural upbringing revealed a high significance level (.001).

### Discussion and conclusions

The findings of this study show basically that machiavellian attitudes are more common among urban than rural Yoruba children. In broad outlines, these findings lend support to the evidence provided by the works of Christie and Geis (1970) and Nachamie (1969) in the United States, of Oksenberg (1971) in Hong Kong and de Niguel (1964) in Spain. The main value of this study therefore derives from the cross-cultural support for the notion that there is something about the urban experience, something about the structure of interpersonal experiences in the urban setting, which increases the likelihood of manipulative and deceitful behaviour, apart from the traditional machiavellian characterisation of the Yoruba.

The evidence yielded by this study seems to call for a discussion of the social setting whence the data come and to which they apply. In doing this, in a general as well as in a specific sense, a coherent theoretical formulation seems to emerge. In general, what there is about the urban experience that increases the incidence of machiavellianism is that complex morality predominates in rural communities. Bascom (1955), Mabogunje (1962), Lloyd (1969) and Ojo (1971) all seem to agree that the Yoruba are undoubtedly the most urbanized people in Tropical Africa.

Specifically, there are urban experiences, as against the rural experience, that would produce more machiavellian attitudes. These experiences have to do with the following factors; the work situation; the vast exposure to mass media; the population mobility from rural centres; the sheer number of people encountered; the lessened importance of kin

contacts; less inter-generational contact; more dependence on others and less dependence on nature; more exposure to the West and Christianity as against traditional religion. Conversely, less machiavellian attitudes among rural children are probably due to some psychosocial characteristics which are restrictive of machiavellianism, such as: a strong sense of communality; a high sense of mutual obligation and gratitude and a deep sense of sympathy with fellowmen.

Thus, this study yields data that make three important contributions. First, it adds to our cross-cultural knowledge. Nachamie (1969), using the same instrument with children of the same age group and same grade level in America, reports mean machiavellian scores of 50.53 for Puerto Rican, 48.60 for Chinese, 42.27 for Negro and 51.33 for Caucasian children. Although it would seem hard to compare mean scores across cultures, the mean score of 59.36 for the Yoruba children appears strikingly interesting. In its indication that scale scores are higher among Yoruba than among American children, the study moves a step, though with due caution, toward comparisons between cultures.

Secondly, the evidence provided by the results of this study extends our confidence that there are in truth some things basic about the urban experience that increase the phenomenon labelled machiavellianism, even though the issue of cause and effect cannot be pressed too hard. It, however, seems reasonable to say that as a classificatory device, urban and rural setting can show patterns of personality development.

Finally, the success of the translated version of the Kiddie Mach Scale seems remarkable. Machiavellianism, as a psychological concept, seems to bear a kind of cross-cultural universality. The concept appears generalizable enough to be translated into a native language which, for the first time, does not have Western tradition.

Table

One-way Analysis of variance of "Mach" scores by  
Yoruba children brought up separately in urban  
and rural areas

Source Between	SS	DF	Ms	F
Urban/Rural Upbringing	53345.10	1	53345.10	588.21* S
Interaction	1715.70	1	857.85	9.46
Within Cell	89693.70	998	90.69	
		.p .001		

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