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# Shakespeare and Psychology: Emotional Intelligence and Machiavellianism in King Lear and Othello

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Eastern Kentucky University

Shakespeare and Psychology: Emotional Intelligence and

Machiavellianism in King Lear and Othello

Honors Thesis

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## Shakespeare and Psychology: Emotional Intelligence and

### Machiavellianism in King Lear and Othello

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#### Abstract

The current study evaluated the role of emotional intelligence and Machiavellianism in two of William Shakespeare's tragedies: Othello and King Lear. The general organization of Shakespeare's tragedies and character development were of particular interest, as the author hypothesized that the presence of emotional intelligence and Machiavellianism in antagonists and protagonists may have a significant effect on the plots of the relevant plays. The current study concluded that the antagonists may be deemed more successful in these Shakespearean tragedies due to the cooperation of two key factors: Machiavellian personalities and higher levels of emotional intelligence than their protagonist counterparts. Potential implications of the results are discussed.

*Keywords: Emotional intelligence, Machiavellian, personality, emotional competencies, William Shakespeare, tragedies, Othello, King Lear*

i.

## Table of Contents

I. INTRODUCTION	7
Emotional Intelligence	7
Machiavellianism	14
Shakespearean Tragedies	18
II. THE CURRENT STUDY	22
Methods	23
Results	25
III. DISCUSSION	28
<i>Othello</i>	28
<i>King Lear</i>	30
IV. CONCLUSIONS	32



## List of Figures

I. The Organization of <i>Othello</i> Figure from Domínguez-Rué and Mrotzek (2012)	20
II. The Organization of <i>King Lear</i> Figure from Domínguez-Rué and Mrotzek (2012)	20
III. Character Comparison for <i>Othello</i>	26
IV. Character Comparison for <i>King Lear</i>	27
V. Character Progression in Emotional Intelligence	27
VI. Character Progression in Machiavellianism	28

## List of Tables

I. Key Abilities (summarized from Mayer et al.'s 2008 article)	8
II. Agreement	25

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## I. Introduction

The current study serves to investigate the intersection of emotional intelligence and Machiavellianism as it is portrayed in two of William Shakespeare's tragedies: King Lear and Othello. The possible effects of the two traits on the relative success of the antagonists and the general structure of the tragedies are of particular interest.

### EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

In 1990, Salovey and Mayer contributed to a collection of literature that proposed that emotions had the potential to contribute to cognitive activity. The pair are typically credited with coining the term emotional intelligence; however, the term was first used by Wayne Payne in his unpublished doctoral dissertation roughly five years prior (Ackley 2016). Emotional intelligence can be broadly defined as a skillset including the ability to observe and understand one's own emotions, along with the emotions of others, and to effectively utilize that information to aid in decision making. The concept and framework proposed by Salovey and Mayer paved the way for scholars and scientists who shared an interest in supporting efforts to bridge the gap between emotionality and cognitive processes. In the almost three decades since its birth, this field has gained the interest of scientists across multiple fields of study; such widespread recognition has contributed to various outlooks in terms of theoretical approaches and models.

**Theoretical approaches to emotional intelligence.** Emotional intelligence is indicative of the ability to integrate emotions and intelligence in order to improve cognitive functioning. EI is comprised of many core abilities; such key competencies include identifying emotions through verbal and non-verbal cues and evaluating emotions based on the circumstances under which they arise. Theoretical approaches to identifying and evaluating emotional intelligence vary

based on whether they place more emphasis on the individual abilities or on the application of a variety of the abilities in practical, everyday scenarios (Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade 2008). Brief overviews of the existing theoretical approaches to emotional intelligence are included below.

*Specific-ability approaches.* Specific-ability approaches to emotional intelligence focus on the individual skills that are fundamental to the construct of EI as a whole. Researchers that utilize this approach for their studies often choose to focus on subtle competencies that are essential for identifying and processing emotional information (Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade 2008). Various scholars have studied a wide range of skills fall under the definition of emotional competencies. Petrides and Furnham's (2003) article on emotion recognition and Suveg and Zeman's (2004) article on emotion management in children with anxiety disorders are two such studies. A table discussing some of the abilities that are central to emotional intelligence has been inserted below.

**[TABLE 1] Key Abilities** (summarized from Mayer et al.'s 2008 article)

Abilities Related to EI	Brief Descriptions of the Abilities
<b>Perception and identification of emotions</b>	The ability to nonverbally decipher social and emotional information, such as accurately recognizing emotional expressions in others.
<b>Using emotions to facilitate thinking</b>	The ability to use emotions to prioritize thinking and make rational decisions based on the emotional context of a situation.
<b>Appraisal of emotions</b>	The ability to accurately understand the situations from which certain emotional responses may rationally arise.
<b>Communication of emotion</b>	The ability to verbally and nonverbally describe one's own feelings and/or those of others.
<b>Emotion management and regulation</b>	The ability to exercise emotional self-control and reframe the perception of a situation to elicit more positive emotional responses.

*Integrative approaches.* In contrast to their specific-ability counterparts, integrative approaches emphasize the interaction and unity of several of the central capabilities. This allows one to gain a general sense of the framework of emotional intelligence rather than the presence of individual abilities. This theoretical approach is best suited for those interested in how several abilities may function interdependently to display the benefits and outcomes associated with emotional intelligence (Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade 2008). The Four-Branch Model of emotional intelligence (Mayer and Salovey 1997, Salovey and Mayer 1990) is a widely used example of an integrative approach to EI.

*Mixed-model approaches.* The third theoretical approach to identifying and studying emotional intelligence is the mixed-model approach. These representations tend to incorporate a wide variety of skills that are not explicitly related to emotional intelligence, such as flexibility and achievement striving. Generally, those that utilize this approach may highlight a particular capability or set of abilities that fall within the range of EI; however, these models typically lack emphasis on emotional intelligence (Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade 2008). The Bar-On model of EI (1997) is a mixed-model approach that extends beyond traditional emotional intelligence measures to incorporate items measuring adaptability and general mood.

**Models of emotional intelligence.** Several distinct models for emotional intelligence have been developed since the introduction of the concept. The three most widely utilized are Salovey and Mayer's (1990) Four-Branch Model, Bar-On's (1997) model, and the Goleman's (1998) model. When it comes to discrepancies among these models of EI, Dana Ackley (2016) summed the differences up quite eloquently: "I believe that understanding [emotional intelligence] may be somewhat like understanding brain anatomy. What you see when you dissect the brain depends upon where you make your cuts". In other words, the different models

may be representative of the different angles from which the authors approached the topic of defining and understanding EI. This section will serve to elaborate and make distinctions among these three.

*The Four-Branch Model.* Mayer and Salovey's (1997) Four-Branch model classifies EI in terms of four categories, or branches, of abilities. The branches are as follows: the perception and appraisal of emotion; the use of emotions to facilitate thought; the comprehension and analysis of emotions; and the management of emotions. The abilities covered under branch one allow an individual to accurately point out their own emotional states as well as those of others. Branch two capabilities use emotional responses to prioritize thoughts or assist in making cognitive judgements. Skills that fall under the third branch would allow an individual to analyze and understand emotional responses and the circumstances in which they occur. Finally, the last branch covers abilities that involve engaging, and sometimes disengaging, with emotions as is appropriate for a person's current situation, as well as how one may influence the emotions of others. For the Four-Branch Model, these subsets of skills are typically considered interrelated, as abilities in one area seem to facilitate the development and improvement of abilities in another.

Each branch of this model has intrapersonal and interpersonal applications. With regards to oneself, high emotional intelligence may be exhibited in successfully appraising a situation, differentiating between appropriate and inappropriate emotional responses, and managing one's own emotional reactions so that the verbal and nonverbal expressions are fitting. With regards to others, high levels of EI may be evident in one's ability to accurately monitor another's emotional responses and utilize that information to either predict future behavior or achieve a personal goal.

The Four-Branch model is typically assessed using the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test, or MSCEIT, which is a measure that was developed by Mayer and colleagues in 2002. The MSCEIT measures an individual's aptitude for acquiring and honing the skills that make up EI. To do so, participants respond to eight total scenarios that are representative of the four branches of abilities.

*The Bar-On Model.* This model of emotional intelligence is coined after its creator, Reuven Bar-On. The Bar-On model defines emotional intelligence as a collection of capabilities that allow one to succeed in the face of environmental or situational pressures (Bar-On 1997). In 2007, Bar-On reiterated that the evolutionary theories of Darwin and Thorndike are at the base of this model's foundation and development, particularly in terms of his interest in the role of non-cognitive abilities on cognitive performance and general lifetime success.

In 2011, the Bar-on model was revised and condensed so that it is now comprised of five composites including self-perception, self-expression, interpersonal, decision making, and stress management (Ackley 2016). Self-perception abilities include confidence, self-actualization, and emotional self-awareness. Emotional expression, assertiveness, and independence all fall under the self-expression section. The subsection of interpersonal abilities range from relationships and social consciousness to empathy. Problem solving, reality testing, and impulse control are all considered facets of the decision making group. The last subset, stress management, includes flexibility, coping, and optimism.

Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) is a self-report measure with a five point scale. This measurement focuses primarily on how often the participant engages in particularly emotionally and socially intelligent behavior (Bar-On 2007). The 2011 revision, titled the EQ-i 2.0, can be

administered as a self-report measure or as a full assessment of fifteen skills that make up the five designated composites.

*The Goleman Model.* This model of emotional intelligence is versatile in that it takes into account data from various fields outside of psychology, including business and education. In his 1998 article on EI, Goleman asserts that thoughts cannot be altogether detached from emotions, as the “very architecture of the brain gives feelings priority over thought”. Goleman’s thinking was influenced by the work of Salovey, Mayer, and Caruso; it follows that this model shares a bit of similarity with the Four-Branch Model (Ackley 2016).

Goleman’s model identifies four distinct dimensions of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Self-awareness includes abilities such as self-assessment, emotional awareness, and confidence. Impulse control is at the center of self-management, which covers the capabilities of emotional self-control, maintaining integrity, flexibility, achievement striving, initiative, and optimism. Social awareness focuses on traits such as empathy, service orientation, and group awareness. Influencing, inspiring, and collaborating with others are all components of relationship management. Goleman’s work tends to elaborate on these emotional competencies in terms of their effectiveness with regard to leadership positions.

As alluded to above, these three models have slightly different definitions of emotional intelligence. The Four-Branch Model focuses on the abilities to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions so as to assist in general thinking. The Goleman Model defines an emotional competence as a learned ability to recognize and manage emotions in order to motivate oneself and others. General success is a topic at the very heart of Bar-On’s model of EI; thus, this model defines emotional skills in relation to the advantage such non-cognitive abilities may give an

individual when it comes to facing environmental stressors. However, the underlying basis among these models are all quite similar: All three models, at their very cores, are interested in the intersection of emotionality and intelligence (Ackley 2016). At the most basic level, emotional intelligence is the use of emotions and emotional knowledge to aid in setting, pursuing, and achieving goals.

**Ability and trait emotional intelligence.** Another significant distinction in the study of emotional intelligence is ability and trait emotional intelligence. Ability EI refers to the cognitive aptitudes that are utilized with respect to emotions, such as emotion identification and regulation. Ability EI is typically measured with performance tests (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey 1999). Trait emotional intelligence, in contrast, refers to how an individual perceives his or her own emotional competence. Self-report measures are utilized to assess trait EI (Petrides, Pérez-González, & Furnham 2007). Essentially, the distinction is that of self-perception versus demonstrated proficiency.

**Emotional intelligence and personality.** Some academics have situated emotional intelligence in the realm of personality. Van der Linden and colleagues (2016) assessed trait and ability EI individually in order to make conclusions on the overlap and correlations between emotional intelligence and the general factor of personality (GFP). The results suggest that both dimensions of EI are related to GFP, but to different extents. Trait emotional intelligence shared significant overlap with the general factor of personality. Trait EI and the GFP account for similar levels of variation in the realms of other personality traits, so much so that Van der Linden considers the possibility that the two terms may, with further analysis, become largely synonymous.. Ability emotional intelligence is also generally positively correlated with the GFP,

but at a considerably lower rate; these findings also accentuate the differences between the two dimensions of EI.

Petrides and colleagues (2007) explored the conceptualization of trait emotional intelligence as a personality factor and its location in the personality hierarchy. The conclusions of this study suggest that trait EI is positioned within the lower levels of personality. Furthermore, an individual's self-perception with regard to emotional competency may account for differences among other personality traits, as well. The framework provided by trait emotional intelligence has the potential to reorganize and clarify individual differences in self-perception across branches of personality that may prove to be interrelated in terms of their links to emotionality.

Scholarly interest in the relationship between emotional intelligence and Machiavellianism is of particular relevance to the current study. Existing literature offers several fascinating suppositions when it comes to not only the nature of this relationship, but also the implications for exceptions to the general correlational findings. This information will be discussed in the following section.

## **MACHIAVELLIANISM**

The concept of Machiavellianism is derived from sixteenth century Italy, and it takes its name from Niccol`o Machiavelli. In his book *Il Principe* (The Prince), Machiavelli suggests that, in order to rise to power and maintain it, one must exploit others using cunning, typically immoral strategies (Rauthmann 2012). Therefore, a cynical world view, emotional detachment, and manipulative interpersonal mannerisms are all central characterizations of an individual with a Machiavellian personality (Christie & Geis 1970, Christie & Lehman 1970).



Multiple studies have explored the relationships among Machiavellianism and the Five-Factor Model (FFM). The FFM is a prominent taxonomy of personality including the traits of neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (McCrae & Costa 1987). Generally, Machiavellianism is negatively correlated with agreeableness and conscientiousness, and positively associated with neuroticism (Paulhus & Williams 2002; O'Boyle, Forsyth, Banks, Story, & White 2015; DeShong, Helle, Lengel, Meyer, & Mullins-Sweatt 2017). In other words, Machiavellianism is typically associated with high levels of traits such as disagreeableness, distrust, hostility, and impulsivity. Consequently, lower levels of traits including self-discipline and deliberation are generally related to higher levels of Machiavellianism.

It follows that individuals with Machiavellian personalities are associated with antagonistic behavior. For example, higher levels of Machiavellianism may lead to higher likelihoods of physical and emotional withdraw behaviors, which may result in lower quality interpersonal relationships (Turan 2015). Furthermore, in women's friendships, women with more Machiavellian personalities are more likely to report having utilized emotional manipulation in terms of mood-worsening and inauthentic tactics such as using a friend's emotional triggers to invoke anger or jealousy (Abell, Brewer, Qualter, & Austin 2016).

**Machiavellianism and emotional intelligence.** The general consensus seems to be that a negative correlation exists between Machiavellianism and EI (Petrides, Vernon, Schermer, & Veselka 2011; Nagler, Reiter, Furtner, & Rauthmann 2014). However, there is evidence to suggest that those who may be exceptions to the general trend may be especially dangerous compared to their lower EI counterparts. In other words, emotional intelligence may complicate the relationship between Machiavellianism and its behavioral outcomes.

Grieve (2011) conducted a study on the impact of self-monitoring, an aspect of emotional intelligence, and sincerity on emotional manipulation, which is a common Machiavellian manipulation tactic. The results indicated that a combination of personality variables, namely honesty-humility and self-monitoring, were related to an individual's likelihood of engaging in emotional manipulation. Generally, Grieve found that individuals who reported being less sincere and more adept at self-monitoring had higher tendencies to engage in emotional manipulation. Therefore, the self-monitoring facet of EI may enable those with the Machiavellian personality traits to be more effective in their attempts at emotional manipulation.

Furthermore, Porter and colleagues' (2011) study highlighted the relationship between emotional intelligence and deceptive facial expressions. The results of this research led the researchers to conclude that individuals with higher levels of EI were able to both display more convincing deceptive emotional expressions and maintain the misleading facial expressions for a longer period of time. This suggests that those with higher emotional intelligence may be better suited for portraying convincing yet insincere emotions in order to serve their purpose.

Nozaki and Koyasu (2013) were interested in how emotional intelligence may affect interpersonal interactions, especially in terms of exclusion and retaliation. For this study, participants in a game simulation were randomly assigned to either the ostracism or inclusion condition in groups of four, with two assigned to each condition. Following the simulation, participants played the "recommendation game", in which one participant proposed a point-value offer to a responding participant, with the other two participants recommending whether or not the responder should accept the proposer's offer. Nozaki and Koyasu found that individuals with high EI tended to regulate the emotions of other participants based on their personal goals. For example, high EI individuals in the inclusion condition who had little or no intention to retaliate

encouraged others to accept fair offers in the game play. On the other hand, those with high EI and a high intention to retaliate themselves encouraged others to seek revenge as well. These results propose that individuals with higher levels of emotional intelligence may be more likely to regulate the emotions of others to achieve their own goals.

Côté and colleagues (2011) conducted a two part study on how emotion-regulation may facilitate both prosocial and socially deviant behavior. The first study highlighted two relevant correlations: First, the positive correlation between moral identity and prosocial behavior; second, the positive correlation between Machiavellianism and interpersonal deviance. The second half of the study expressed the versatile nature of emotional intelligence, in which emotion-regulation knowledge strengthened the correlations between both personality types and their behavioral outcomes. Côté et al. assert that, even though the over-all trend suggests that Machiavellianism is negatively correlated with emotional intelligence, not all individuals with Machiavellian personalities have lower levels of EI. Therefore, Machiavellian individuals with high EI are more successful in their attempts when they engage in socially deviant behavior.

Overall, the studies discussed in this section contribute to the concept that emotional intelligence may be utilized by Machiavellian personalities to achieve their own deviant goals. EI allows for more potential to employ Machiavellian tactics such as emotional manipulation. Individuals with higher levels of EI are able to portray more convincing, longer-lasting deceptive facial expressions. Emotional intelligence may aid in an individual's attempts to regulate the responses of others in order to meet their personal goals. Simply put, higher levels of EI may make it easier for an individual to reach his goals, regardless of intent.

## SHAKESPEAREAN TRAGEDIES

The current study is primarily interested in two aspects of William Shakespeare's tragedies; characterization and general structure. More specifically, the author wishes to explore the presence of emotional intelligence and Machiavellianism in Othello and King Lear and how these factors may contribute to the character development and plot of the two plays.

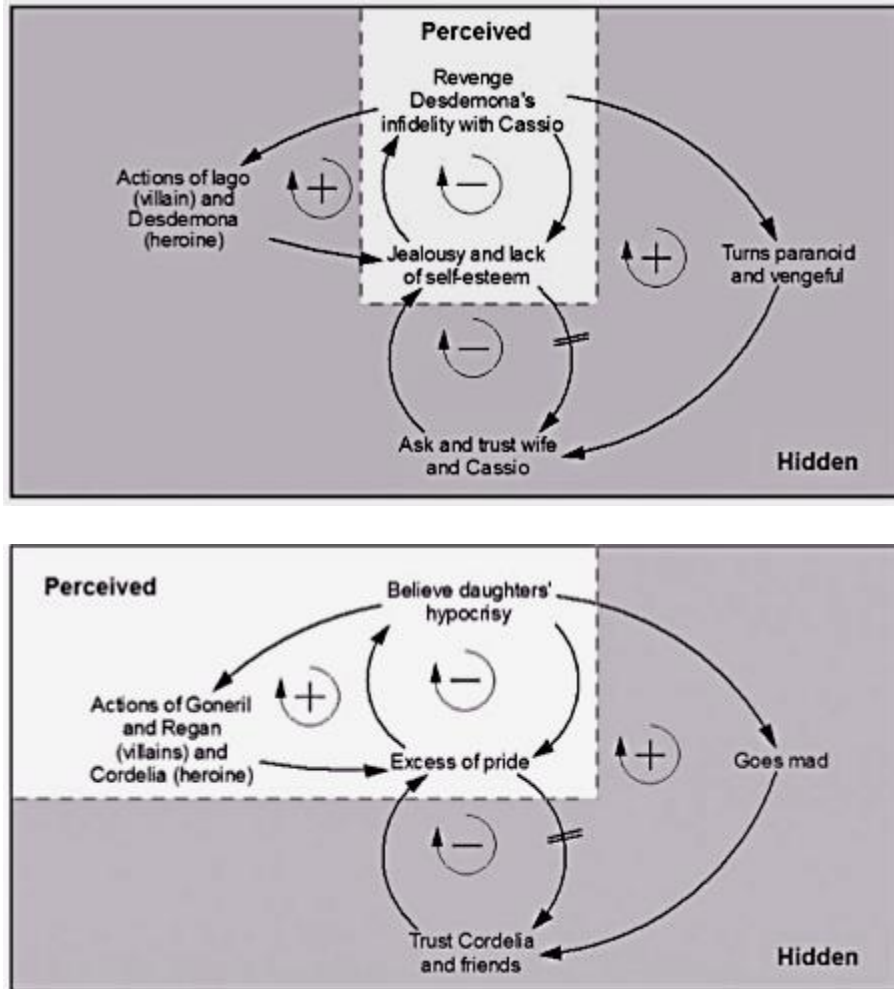
**General structure of Shakespeare's tragedies.** Domínguez-Rué and Mrotzek (2012) identified and detailed a generic organization system that is present in William Shakespeare's four largest tragedies: Hamlet, King Lear, Macbeth, and Othello. The pair approached the topic using Senge's (2006) 'shifting the burden' archetype. In this system, the protagonist has the option to pursue one of two resolutions to his problem. A symptomatic solution is easily within reach, but brings immediate positive results only in terms of alleviating a symptom of the larger issue. A fundamental solution, however, has the potential to resolve the situation altogether, but it is harder to reach and is more costly, either in resources or time, at the personal expense protagonist.

More often than not, the protagonist of a tragedy chooses to attempt a symptomatic solution; this results in a feedback loop in which, after a short-term alleviation of the symptom, the symptom either returns or new symptom arises to take its place. Furthermore, the consequence of utilizing a symptomatic solution is that the character may descend into some form of insanity or paranoia and become dependent on symptomatic solutions. Consequently, in order for the protagonist of a tragedy to accept and attempt a fundamental solution, some level of change must occur within the character, so that he has the necessary insight into the conflict as a whole and the means by which it can be overcome. The fundamental solution is typically achieved (if it is truly realized at all) at the end of Shakespearean tragedies, when it is too late to

reap the benefits of it and after the side-effects of symptomatic solutions have taken their toll on the characters. How the two tragedies relevant to the current study fit into this general structure is discussed below, summarized from Domínguez-Rué and Mrotzek's (2012) article.

*The archetype in Othello.* Othello's tragic flaw is his jealousy. This personality flaw makes it much easier for Iago to mislead the Moor; simultaneously, it makes it more difficult for the namesake character to see the value in and attempt a fundamental solution. For this play, the fundamental solution would be to simply ask Desdemona and Cassio about Iago's claims in infidelity. However, since Othello is able to neither recognize Iago's villainy nor appraise the true issues of the situation due to his lack of insight, he plans to murder his wife to deal with his jealousy that borders on rage. Only in the last scene does the Moor become capable of appraising the situation and understanding his fatal mistakes. An illustration of how the archetype applies to the plot of *Othello* is provided on the following page.

*The archetype in King Lear.* King Lear's fatal flaw is his narcissism. He divides his kingdom based solely on how well his daughters publicly proclaim their love for him; however, his excessive pride causes him to mistake the authenticity of Cordelia's affection for a lack of gratitude and disowns her. Thus, he is deceived by Goneril and Regan. Only after he has granted his deceitful daughters enough power to be cause downfall does Lear come to understand his situation and that he should have merely pursued the fundamental solution: He should have taken Cordelia's words and actions for the display of love that they were. An illustration of how the archetype applies to the plot of *King Lear* is provided below.



[FIG 1 & 2] Illustrations from Domínguez-Rué and Mrotzek (2012)

**A precedence of Shakespeare in psychology.** Schwartz (1965) writes that Shakespeare “conveys in his characters a sense of the person”. In other words, William Shakespeare creates characters that his audience can, to some degree, come to know as thoroughly as they know the people they interact with daily. Perhaps this is why psychologists have expressed interest in The Bard’s characters; perhaps the field that strives to understand human-nature wants to extend that understanding to highly revered characters in fiction.

In 2010, Whissel evaluated 105 Shakespearean characters based on the Dictionary of Affect in Language, which is a computerized assessment that quantifies the emotions of the characters based on their dialogue. Whissel situated the main characters within the two-dimensional approach that was prominent during the time that William Shakespeare lived: the theory of humors. The theory of the four humors consisted of two traits and their opposites, with sanguine and melancholy situated on one spectrum and choleric and phlegmatic on the other. This research used the lines that William Shakespeare wrote for his characters to place them not only within the theory of humors, but also to connect them to their more modern equivalents, such as Wundt and Eysenck.

*Othello* has captured the attention of academics across psychological subfields. Cafalu (2103), for example, analyzes Iago's theory of mind. Cafalu concludes that, even though Iago seems to have a certain inclination for understanding how others will think and react to his actions, he fails to accurately gauge the minds of others. Where Iago forms reliable and plausible theories about others, he also tends to escalate them to such a great extent that his own behavior becomes counterintuitive. The play also serves to differentiate the forms of aggression exhibited by Othello and Iago. Where Othello's violence toward Desdemona is typically considered a crime of passion, Iago's victimization of Desdemona, which serves the only purpose of orchestrating Othello's downfall, is a clear example of instrumental aggression (Sundararajan 2009). Iago's Machiavellian tendencies have also caught the attention of scholars such as Fleury (2011) and LaMonda (1995) who assert that Iago's ultimate success in deceiving Othello highlights his mastery of Machiavellian tactics.

Hanley (1986) provides an analysis of the characters of *King Lear*, along with their relationships among one another, from a psychoanalytic viewpoint. Hanley explains that Lear's

relationship with his daughters is impaired from the beginning by his narcissistic tendencies. Once the king makes his preference for Cordelia clear, only to turn her away in favor of her more cunningly outspoken sisters, he unwittingly sets his own demise into action. In lieu of their father's affection, Goneril and Regan scheme to claim what they can of his land and power. Thus, estranged from the daughter that truly loves him, King Lear grows dependent and at the mercy of his other two daughters. Similarly, Gloucester is the one who drives Edmund's hatred for Edgar. By depriving his illegitimate son of familial affection, he inspires Edmund's plan to have his more favorable brother exiled as a means of retaliation.

As illustrated above, the works of William Shakespeare are not novel to psychological literature. However, there is still need for elaboration on how the personalities of The Bard's characters evolve throughout the plays and how their personalities contribute to the structure and plot of each play.

## **II. The Current Study**

The current study aims to explore the impact of the personalities of the main characters of Othello and King Lear on the relative success of the antagonists and the shifting the burden archetype discussed above. While the current study is highly exploratory, there are several working hypotheses that are relevant to the topic at hand. First, the author hypothesizes that the antagonists of both plays will have higher levels of both emotional intelligence and Machiavellianism. Should that prove to be the case, the author expects that a combination of higher levels of EI and Machiavellian personality traits may allow the antagonists of the plays to be successful in their malevolent endeavors. Furthermore, the author anticipates that an increase in emotional intelligence will be perceived in the protagonist at the end of each play, and that such a change may allow for the belated realization of the fundamental solution.



## METHODS

**Measures.** The current study utilized both the Profile of Emotional Competence (PEC) and the Mach-IV. The PEC was used to evaluate the emotional intelligence of selected Shakespearean characters while the Mach-IV to evaluate the Machiavellian characteristics of the same characters. For the sake of conciseness, ten items were pulled from the PEC and altered to fit the purpose of this study. While the entire twenty items of the Mach-IV were utilized, the scale was also adapted to suit the needs of the current study.

*The Profile of Emotional Competence.* The Profile of Emotional Competence (PEC) is a scale created by Brasseur and colleagues (2013). The PEC distinguishes intrapersonal emotional competence and interpersonal emotional competence as two individual factors of emotional intelligence. Thus, the measure contains 10 subscales: intrapersonal identification, interpersonal identification, intrapersonal expression, interpersonal expression, intrapersonal comprehension, interpersonal comprehension, intrapersonal regulation, interpersonal regulation, intrapersonal utilization, and interpersonal utilization.

*The Mach-IV.* Christie and Geis (1970), published the Mach-IV. The Likert-type measure incorporates statements inspired by Machiavelli's writings and asks participants to indicate to which extent they agree with each. The Mach-IV is a twenty item scale that measures Machiavellianism on five sublevels through inquiries about the manifestation of cold and strategic thinking patterns, cynical world views, emotional detachment, egocentric motives, and the use of exploitative or manipulative means to achieve one's goals.

**Procedures.** Ten items were taken from the PEC, for the sake of brevity, for the current study. The ten selected items included the following:

1. This Character is aware of his/her own emotions and is able to make connections between those emotions and the events or circumstances that cause them.
2. This character is receptive of the non-verbal emotional expressions of others.
3. This character understands the verbal emotional expressions of others.
4. This character can differentiate between authentic and false expressions of emotion in others.
5. This character knows how to influence the emotions of others.
6. This character knows how to provoke others to behave in a way that suits his/her interests.
7. This character knows how to best motivate others.
8. This character is able to express himself/herself through verbal and non-verbal cues so as to make his/her desired impression.
9. This character is able to remain calm and rational while in stressful or otherwise unpleasant situations.
10. This character is able to resolve unpleasant feelings in productive, rational ways.

Those ten items, accompanied by all twenty items from the Mach-IV, were combined to form the survey utilized for this study. As can be noted in the items listed above, due to the literary nature of this research, the wording of the items was modified, but great care was taken to ensure that the meaning and significance behind each item remained essentially the same.

Once the total of thirty items were gathered and adjusted for the sake of the current study, material source experts were sought out. Due to limited access to individuals highly knowledgeable in the two relevant tragedies, only two material source experts were identified and utilized. Both experts met the criteria of having sufficiently previously engaged with the

material either in terms of some combination of class content, research interest, and/or recreational interest with regard to the works *Othello* and *King Lear*.

Both material source experts were given the survey, consisting of the ten items from the PEC and the twenty items from the Mach-IV, to fill out with regard to the six relevant characters. For *Othello*, the selected characters were Othello and Iago. For *King Lear*, the selected characters were King Lear, Regan, Edgar, and Edmund. For the current study, Othello, Lear, and Edgar are regarded as protagonists; in contrast, Iago, Regan, and Edmund are classified as antagonists.

## RESULTS

Due to the limitation of having a sample size of two ( $n=2$ ), only basic mathematical calculations were used to formulate the results of this study.

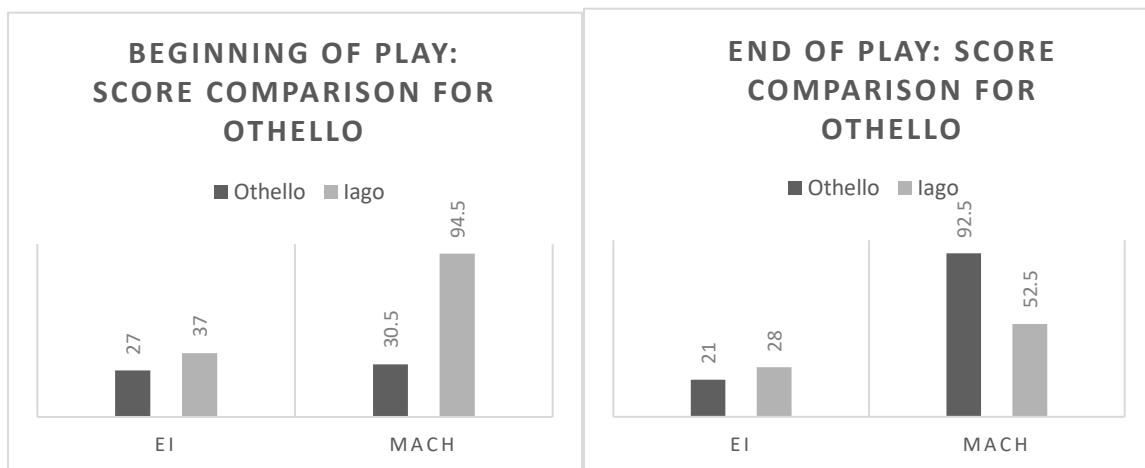
**Agreement.** The first concern was that of determining to what degree the two material source experts agreed, or how the comparable their responses. Overall, the experts agreed on 274 of the 360 items in the survey, which makes the calculated agreement for this research to be roughly 76.11%. Other general trends in agreement are listed in the table below.

**[TABLE 2] Agreement**

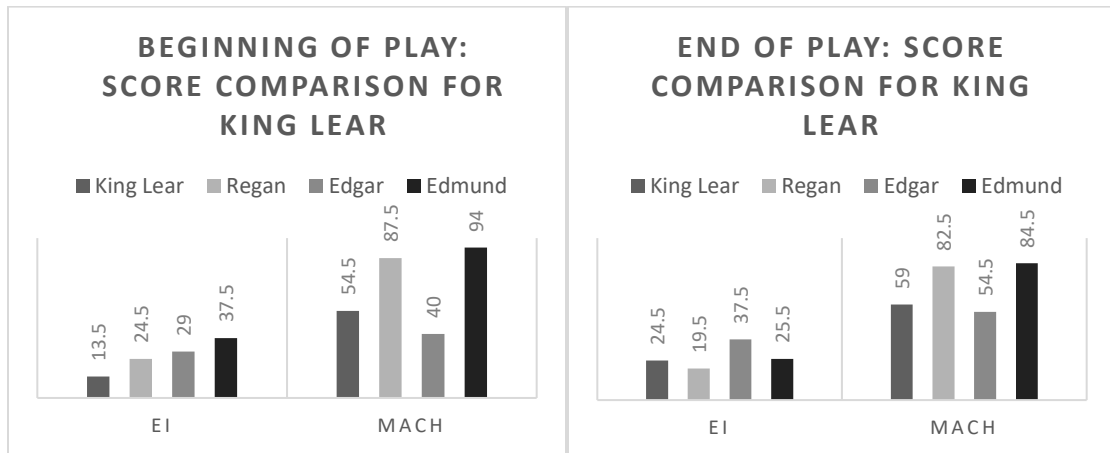
Agreement (Rounded to nearest 0.01%)			
By Play (Number of items agreed upon/Total items)		By Point in Play (Number of items agreed upon/Total items)	
Othello	King Lear	Beginning	End
(101/120) 84.16%	(173/240) 72.08%	(148/180) 82.22%	(126/180) 70%
Overall Agreement: 76.11%			

**Comparing protagonists and antagonists by play.** The second purpose of this study was to evaluate each of the six selected characters in terms of their emotional intelligence and Machiavellianism. The average score for each character on both measures was determined by finding the means of the scores provided by each expert. Across the characters for both of the plays, the antagonists scored higher on the measures for both emotional intelligence and Machiavellianism. This remained true throughout the play, from beginning to end. Graphs illustrating the differences among the average scores of the protagonists and antagonists can be found below.

**[FIGURE 3] Character Comparisons for *Othello***



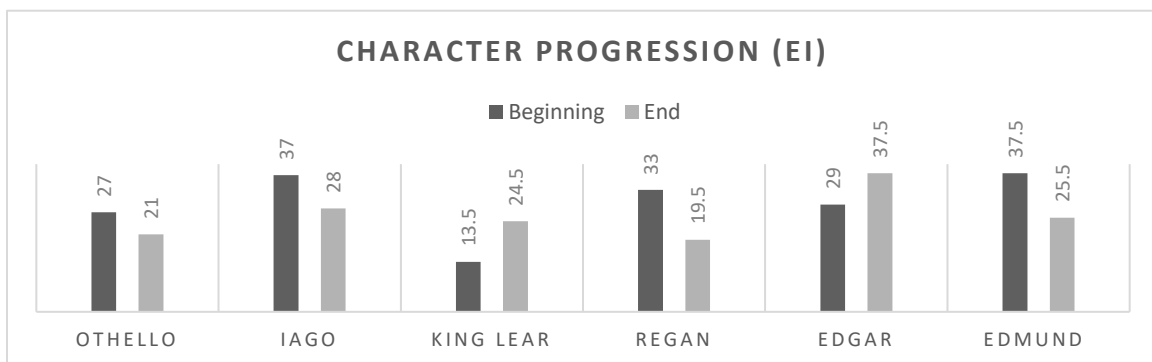
[FIGURE 4] Character Comparisons for *King Lear*



**Comparing characters across time.** The last purpose of the current study was to examine changes in the traits of the same character from the beginning of the plays to the end, which could be used indicative of character development.

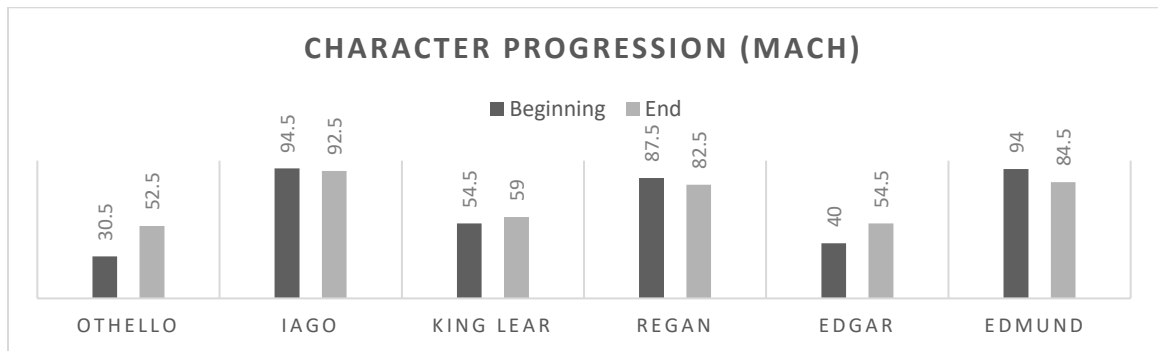
*Emotional intelligence.* Changes in emotional intelligence over the course of the plays occurred for all six of the selected characters. For the play *Othello*, the perceived emotional intelligence of both characters decreased as the plot progressed. For *King Lear*, the levels of emotional intelligence increased in the protagonists while decreasing in the antagonists. These trends are illustrated below.

[FIGURE 5] Character Progression in Emotional Intelligence



*Machiavellianism.* Changes in terms of Machiavellianism are also prominent across characters as the plays progress. Generally, the trait of Machiavellianism showed an increasing trend in protagonists for both plays. In contrast, Machiavellianism seemed to decline for the antagonists. This trend is illustrated below.

**[FIGURE 6] Character Progression in Machiavellianism**



### III. Discussion

The current study sought to explore the portrayal of emotional intelligence and Machiavellianism in two of Shakespeare's tragedies, as well as the possible implications of the two psychological factors on the plots and structures of the plays. The findings and their potential outcomes will be organized by play and discussed below.

#### ***OTHELLO***

At the onset of the play, Iago exhibits higher levels of both emotional intelligence and Machiavellianism. Individuals high in Machiavellianism tend to be cynical, manipulative, and antagonistic in nature (Christie & Geis 1970, Turan 2015); thus, it seems reasonable to infer from the dialogue that Shakespeare wrote for the two selected characters that Iago would have a personality that is steeped in more Machiavellian ideals and practices than that of Othello. In

terms of emotional intelligence, several of the key abilities associated with EI, such as emotion perception and management, are more prominent in Iago, particularly with regard to his aptitude to elicit his desired emotional responses from other characters. The cooperation of these two factors, higher EI and Machiavellianism, may allow Iago to successfully manipulate other key characters to achieve his own ends.

Over the course of the play, several changes are evident in the two relevant characters. First, both Othello's and Iago's perceived level of emotional intelligence decreases. For Iago, this change could be due to his sudden inability to control the situation and deceive others with emotionally manipulative tactics at the same rate of success that readers see at the beginning of the tragedy. However, this decline in Iago's Machiavellianism may also be related to the concept that his original level of Machiavellianism was so close to the maximum (94.5/100) that this score had very limited potential to increase. Even though this regression in Othello contradicts one of the author's original hypotheses, the change can be respected and understood in retrospect. The fundamental solution, which could be to simply discuss the situation with Desdemona and Cassio, is not truly realized. Othello descends quickly into madness after realizing how thoroughly he had been deceived and, in his despair, he commits suicide. This could denote Othello's devastating inability to manage and regulate his emotions, and consequently his behavior, appropriately.

The second change occurs with regard to the perceived Machiavellianism of the two characters. Iago's Machiavellianism seems to decrease and, again, this could be in comparison to his success in employing Machiavellian tactics in the beginning; at the end of the play, he is unable to deceive others or manipulate his way out of neither the revelation of his crimes nor the

punishment for them. For Othello, an increase in Machiavellianism may be representative of his distrust in human nature after being so meticulously undone at the hand of a man he had trusted.

While the author can only speculate about the effects of these changes on the plot of the tragedy *Othello*, there are two points that suggest that the cooperation of the psychological factors of emotional intelligence and Machiavellianism may be significant to the structure of William Shakespeare's tragedies. First, Iago's combination of being a highly Machiavellian and emotionally intelligent character, more so than the namesake protagonist, may allow for his ultimate success in orchestrating Othello's downfall. Second, Othello's decrease in emotional intelligence at the end of the play may essentially be what prevents him from recognizing the fundamental solution of his conflict and, thus, what leads him to believe that ending his life would be the only fitting resolution.

### ***KING LEAR***

The antagonists, Edmund and Regan, are perceived to have higher levels of emotional intelligence and Machiavellianism. Again, considering the general nature of Machiavellianism, it is neither surprising nor innovative to recognize that Regan is more Machiavellian than King Lear and that Edmund is more Machiavellian than Edgar. In terms of emotional intelligence, the antagonists are perceived to more readily display and utilize their emotional capabilities than their respective protagonist. As mentioned above, higher levels of EI and Machiavellianism, may give the antagonists the advantage they need to effectively manipulate other characters in order to meet their own goals.

With regard to changes in emotional intelligence over the course of the play, the perceived EI of both antagonists decreases at the end. In congruence with the same occurrence in



Iago, this decline could be due to the observed failure to apply emotion-based knowledge effectively in relation to the successful employment of such skills at the beginning of the tragedy. However, in contrast to what occurred in *Othello*, both protagonists seem to be more emotionally intelligent at the end of the play. Both Lear and Edgar appear to have more success in recognizing the emotions of others as well as managing their own emotional responses. This could allow Lear to finally come to trust the modest expression of Cordelia's affection, which could be considered the fundamental solution to his conflict, before he dies in the grief of his loyal daughter's death. For Edgar, this change could allow him to realize the villainy of his brother Edmund and confront him in the form of a duel.

Similarly to the characterization seen in *Othello*, both antagonists and protagonists decrease and increase respectively in terms of Machiavellianism. Once again, this decline could be evidence of fewer successful incidences of Regan and Edmund being successful in their malevolent endeavors. Meanwhile, the increase for King Lear and Edgar could be the consequence of being deceived by those in whom they had placed their trust and reverence.

The emotional intelligence and Machiavellianism of these four characters may be significant to the plot of *King Lear*. Having higher initial levels of EI and Machiavellianism than their respective protagonists may allow for the early successes of Regan and Edmund in manipulating other key characters. However, as Lear and Edgar appear to expand their emotional intelligence at the end of the play, the protagonists come to understand the malice that they had once been blind to and they are able to reach their fundamental solutions, even if belatedly.

#### IV. Conclusions

The current study offers insight, even if it is based in two literary works, into the functionality and implementation of emotional intelligence and Machiavellianism as well as the interactions between them. This research corroborates the findings of several other scholars in the field who suggest that emotional intelligence is not innately prosocial and benevolent, rather that it may simply facilitate the success of meeting an individual's goals (Grieve 2011, Porter et al. 2011, Nozaki & Koyasu 2013, Côté et al. 2011).

This research is not without its limitations. First, even though reducing the number of items for the survey was deemed necessary, excluding items from measures may sacrifice some level of validity for the research in which they were used. Second, such a small sample size made it impossible to utilize statistical data analysis; this means that there may be other undetected trends in the data collected for this project. Future interested parties could acknowledge and rectify such limitations to improve the quality of related research.

As for future directions, scholars could build upon this work in numerous ways. Those interested could pull in a larger number of selected characters, incorporate a greater number of tragedies, or investigate the presence and implications of emotional intelligence and Machiavellianism in the comedies of William Shakespeare.

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