CORRUPT CHARACTERS WITHIN COOPERATIVE CLIMATES:
CAN PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY BUFFER AGAINST SABOTAGE BEHAVIORS BY
MACHIAVELLIAN EMPLOYEES?

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ABSTRACT

Machiavellians are known to exploit others in pursuit of their own personal, self-interested goals. Past research indicates that Machs are better able to engage in exploitative behaviors under conditions that allow them to do so. Drawing from Trait Activation Theory, I examine the behavioral tendencies of Machiavellian employees in climates of psychological safety. The results suggest that a Machiavellian’s perception of psychological safety can serve as a buffer against sabotage behaviors. Implications of these findings, as well as future research directions, are discussed.
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Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

“Since love and fear can hardly exist together, if we must choose between them, it is far safer to be feared than loved.” (Machiavelli, 1513/1981)

When Niccolo Machiavelli wrote the 1513 political treatise, The Prince, he probably never imagined it would inspire researchers Richard Christie and Florence Geis to collapse its ideas into a self-serving, cynical, and amoral character trait called Machiavellianism. Nevertheless, this characteristic has spurred over four decades of research, linking it to important negative organizational outcomes, such as job dissatisfaction (e.g., Corzine, Buntzman, & Busch, 1999), turnover intentions (e.g., Becker & O’Hair, 2007), and unethical behavior (e.g., Sakalaki, Richardson, & Thepaut, 2007). Given these findings, it is no surprise that the behaviors of Machiavellians (Machs) can pose a substantial threat to the well being of an organization and its members in many respects.

Formally stated, Machiavellianism refers to individuals that harbor a cynical worldview, a propensity to behave unethically, and a tendency to engage in a variety of manipulative and exploitative tactics that secure personal outcomes (Christie & Geis, 1970). Past research generally agrees that Machs thrive when they are given room for improvisation. For example, Machs tend to perform substantially better in organizations characterized by loose supervision, low hierarchy, and lack of rule regulation (Gable, Hollon, & Dangello, 1992; Shultz, 1993). However, this superior performance may be achieved through illegitimate and often unethical means (Gable et al., 1992). For example, it is likely that Machs would engage in social undermining behaviors, which refers to sabotaging a colleague’s position in the workplace, as well as surface acting, in order to conceal duplicitous intentions.
While past research has contributed to our understanding of situational factors that spur Machiavellian actions, specific climates that can unwittingly permit Machiavellian behaviors have not been identified. Gable et al. (1992) alluded to this shortcoming by stating that “situational parameters should be incorporated into Machiavellian studies,” and elaborated that environmental parameters should be defined and operationalized that are “conducive to the exercise of Machiavellianism” (p. 323). Similarly, Wilson, Near, and Miller (1996) deemed it necessary to specify social environments that contribute to the success of Machs.

The current paper echoes the concern of past researchers that there is a dearth of research on situational factors that elicit Machiavellianism. To address this concern, this paper argues that climates that allow authentic expression amongst employees are one such operationalization of a Machiavellian-conducive environment. Specifically, work climates of high psychological safety, ones that encourage self-disclosure amongst colleagues without interpersonal risk, may be particularly susceptible to exploitative behavior by Machs. Psychological safety is a climate perceived as beneficial to organizations, as researchers have linked it to a host of favorable outcomes, including team learning behavior (Edmondson, 1999), creativity (Kark & Carmeli, 2009; Kessel, Kratzer, & Shultz, 2012) and voice behavior (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009). Even popular psychology books extol the virtues of being your authentic self at work. However, genuine expression at work may be a double-edged sword. Indeed, researchers have recently begun to explore the potential negative side effects of a psychologically safe environment (e.g., Pearsall & Ellis, 2011).

I draw on Trait-Activation Theory to argue that psychologically safe climates are likely to activate the exploitative and manipulative nature of Machs, allowing them to socially undermine colleagues. In other words, authentic expression and self disclosure amongst
employees, particularly of the kind of sensitive task-based and emotion-based information, is likely to arouse Machs’ self-serving tendencies that permit them to engage in social undermining. Furthermore, the self-disclosure that is characterized by psychological safety will likely be foreign to Machs, who are generally unwilling to share personal information, prompting them to surface act. This model is illustrated in its entirety in Figure 1.

By proposing this model, I hope to make several empirical, theoretical and practical contributions. Empirically, this paper replicates the previously established relationship between Machiavellianism and social undermining with a new sample in both an MBA and an applied setting. It also examines whether climates that allow latitude for expressing mistakes and emotions are conducive to Machiavellian behavior. In terms of theory, I consider the unintended side effects of climates of psychological safety, ones in which employees feel safe revealing their vulnerabilities, mistakes, and feelings. I also apply the principles of trait activation theory to suggest that psychological safety activates a Mach’s tendency to social undermine and surface act. Moreover, I am introducing surface acting into the Machiavellianism nomological network by proposing that Machs regularly practice this behavior. Lastly, I hope to alert practitioners to consider the Machiavellian tendencies of their employees before initiating a top-down climate shift. Practitioners can also be warned about hiring Machiavellian employees if a self-disclosure promoting climate is present.

**Machiavellianism and Workplace Deviance**

Machiavellianism belongs to a broader network of socially aversive personality traits also including narcissism and psychopathy, collectively called the “dark triad” (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Indeed, researchers have identified a modest positive relationship between
Machiavellianism and narcissism (Paulhus, Williams, & Harms, 2001; Paulhus & Williams, 2002; O’Boyle, Forsyth, Banks, & McDaniel, 2011), and a more substantial link between Machiavellianism and psychopathy (Paulhus et al., 2001; Ray & Ray, 1982; O’Boyle et al., 2011). These traits all imply a degree of malevolency that directly impacts interpersonal behavior (O’Boyle et al., 2011, Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Despite these commonalities, it is clear that each of the dark triad has distinctive motivations and strategies (O’Boyle et al., 2011; Wu & LeBreton, 2011). More specifically, while psychopaths are characterized by a lack of empathy, narcissists are marked by a sense of entitlement, and Machiavellians are defined by their manipulative tactics (Wu & LeBreton, 2011). Given Machiavellianism’s emphasis is on manipulative behaviors for self-advancement, it is the dark triad trait that is most pertinent to the current research.

Since Machs are characterized by amorality, distrustfulness, desire for status and control, and manipulative deceit (Dahling, Whitaker, & Levy, 2009), it is not surprising that they are known to engage in a plethora of counterproductive work behaviors (e.g., Dahling, Kuyumcu, & Librizzi, 2012; Tang & Chen, 2007; Hegarty & Sims, 1979; Granitz, 2003; Gunnthorsdottir, McCabe, and Smith, 2002). Indeed, Machs will go to extreme measures, including interpersonal deviance, to surpass their colleagues. Accordingly, they are considered to be unconscientious (e.g., Austin, Farrelly, Black, & Moore, 2007), amoral (Biron, 2010), and dishonest (McLeod & Genereux, 2008). In a review of the empirical, ethical decision-making literature from 1996-2003, O’Fallon and Butterfield (2005) determined a consistent negative link between Machiavellianism and ethical decision-making, including behaviors such as lying, stealing, cheating, and sabotage.
Research demonstrates that Machs are inclined to lying. For example, Ross and Robertson (2000) demonstrated that Machs have a tendency to lie overtly and are more susceptible to taking advantage of an absence of explicit ethical guidelines to deceive others. Even more disconcerting, a lab study revealed that lying Machs were believed just as much as honest Machs (Geis & Moon, 1981). As an explanation for their tendency to lie, McLeod and Genereux (2008) demonstrated that Machs typically lie in conditions that will directly benefit them, rather than for reasons of altruism or social acceptance.

Research also suggests that Machs are willing to steal, even if they are being trusted. For example, Harrell and Hartnagel (1976) conducted a study in a laboratory setting in which participants had the opportunity to earn money honestly or to steal from another subject serving as a supervisor. While low Machs only stole from supervisors who acted distrustfully, high Machs stole from both trusting and distrustful supervisors, indicating that Machs are apt to stealing regardless of whether they are being trusted or not.

The link between Machiavellianism and cheating has also been established. A role-play experiment, for example, revealed that Machs were more likely to cheat on service guarantees than low Machs (Wirtz & Kum, 2004). Consistently, Bloodgood, Turnley, and Mudrak (2010) found that Machs generally had no qualms about two specific types of cheating, academic cheating (cheating on assignments and tests) and passive cheating (consciously profiting from another’s mistake). Moreover, the authors examined the degree to which ethics training can discourage tolerance for cheating. The results suggested that while low Machs were less tolerant of passive cheating after taking the course, high Machs were even more tolerant of passive cheating after taking the course. This surprising finding implies that Machs may be immune to ethics training, and in fact may be encouraged by it.
In a similar line of research, Hegarty and Sims (1978) conducted a laboratory experiment in which graduate students acted as sales managers and were given the option of offering kickback payments to fictional purchasing agents in order to increase sales. The authors found that Machs were more likely to offer these illicit bonuses; and this tendency was reinforced when their behavior was rewarded as well as under conditions of competition. The authors corroborated their original findings in a similarly designed follow-up study with a different sample (Hegarty & Sims, 1979).

Machs are also prone to practicing sabotage behaviors at work. For example, Giacalone and Knouse (1990) conducted a study in which participants rated how acceptable it would be to engage in a variety of sabotage behaviors, and were given a list of 51 sabotage acts, including actions such as placing a false order, altering company records, and purposely delaying work processes. It was found that participants who are both Machiavellian and hostile justify sabotage behaviors more than individuals who are neither Machiavellian nor hostile. The authors contended that hostile Machs will justify sabotage behaviors in order to attain a desired outcome.

As illustrated, research on Machiavellianism robustly suggests that Machs engage in a repertoire of unethical behaviors. Likewise, Machiavellianism has been identified as one of the main personality traits predictive of unethical behaviors (Jones & Kavanagh, 1996). One of these unethical behaviors is likely to be social undermining.

**Machiavellianism and Social Undermining**

Social undermining refers to “behavior intended to hinder, over time, the ability [of others] to establish and maintain positive interpersonal relationships, work-related success, and favorable reputation” (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002, p. 332). Example behaviors include deliberately making someone feel incompetent, concealing important or necessary information,
gossiping, spreading rumors about a colleague, slowing down the work of coworkers, competing for status or recognition, and intentionally relaying erroneous information about the job (Duffy, Ganster, Shaw, Johnson, & Pagon, 2006; Greenbaum, Mawritz, & Eissa, 2012). Not surprisingly, research has consistently linked perceived social undermining to negative outcomes for the target, such as reduced self-efficacy and organizational commitment and increased counterproductive behaviors and somatic complaints (Duffy, et al., 2002), as well as intentions to quit, depression, and decreased trust in supervisor (Duffy, et al., 2006).

Common antecedents associated with social undermining include bottom-line mentality and envy. Bottom-line mentality refers to “a one-dimensional frame of mind that revolves around bottom-line outcomes to the neglect of competing organizational priorities” (Greenbaum, et al., 2012, p. 1). Envy has also been identified as a common antecedent to social undermining especially when employees are also low on social identification (i.e., lack bonds with colleagues) (Duffy, Scott, Shaw, Tepper, & Aquino, 2012).

Given the exploitative nature of social undermining, it is conceivable that Machs would partake in this behavior, especially since Machiavellian engagement in deviant behavior is well documented. Furthermore, the antecedents to social undermining mentioned above, bottom-line mentality and envy, also share parallels with Machiavellianism. Like Machs, bottom-line thinkers are threatened by the success of others and are likely to perceive anyone as an adversary (Greenbaum et al., 2012). Bottom-line thinkers “tend to treat every situation as if the bottom line is the only relevant outcome” (p. 1), which is analogous to Machs’ worldview that “the ends justify the means.” Moreover, Machiavellianism has been found to relate positively to envy (Vecchio, 2005). Duffy et al. (2002) specified that envy leads to social undermining especially when the employee lacks bonds with colleagues. Research also suggests that Machs lack
emotional ties with their coworkers and their organization, making them more likely to engage in social undermining. In fact, while Machs are committed to their careers, they tend not to be committed to their organization, supervisor, and team (Zettler, Niklas, & Benjamin, 2011). Consistently, Machs are not typically driven by prosocial values or organizational concern (Becker & O’Hair, 2007). Thus, due to their detachment from the organization and their tendency to be envious, Machs are likely to engage in social undermining.

Indeed, one prior study found a correlation of .31 between Machiavellianism and social undermining (Greenbaum et al., 2012). This fairly moderate correlation is justifiable, as Machs are not expected to engage in all types of social undermining. While social undermining includes overt behaviors such as directly insulting employees, it is probable that Machs would only engage in covert, more underhanded forms of social undermining, such as delaying work, communicating incorrect information, and gossiping, all with the intent of tarnishing the target employee’s reputation. Duffy et al. (2002) noted that passive forms of social undermining, such as withholding needed information or failing to defend a colleague, can be portrayed as inadvertent by the perpetrator. Such surreptitious behaviors are more consistent with the duplicitous nature of Machs, who aim to have their actions go undetected. Thus, in this study, I expect to replicate a fairly moderate relationship between Machiavellianism and social undermining.

**Hypothesis 1:** Machiavellianism will be positively related to social undermining.

Social undermining is one example of a negative behavior Machs practice in order to reap sought outcomes. Another behavior Machs are likely to employ is surface acting, an emotion regulation technique in which one superficially portrays a desired emotion. It is plausible that Machs practice surface acting because it is in their nature to assume fake personas in order to
gain favor from colleagues and powerful others. Moreover, Machs might employ surface acting for the purpose of concealing their efforts of sabotaging coworkers. However, because this is an emotional regulation strategy generally deemed unfavorable, it can have negative implications for the actor and for the organization.

**Machiavellianism and Surface Acting**

In his original writings, Machiavelli “emphasized maintaining a public appearance of virtue while practicing whatever means were required to achieve one’s ends” (Geis & Moon, 1981, p. 766). Maintaining an outward façade, as Machs tend to do, has been labeled surface acting. More specifically, surface acting refers to an emotional labor strategy in which the actor modifies facial expressions to be consistent with the required display rules, without altering inner feelings to be consistent with those facial expressions. This is in contrast to deep acting, in which the actor actively modifies inner feelings to align with the required display rules, thus producing natural facial expressions (Hochschild, 1983). While deep acting is often seen as more effortful, as it requires modifying how one is feeling, surface acting is commonly considered as more taxing to the individual. There are several mechanisms that explain this reasoning, namely that surface acting leads to a state of emotional dissonance, or the tension that results from feeling one way and behaving another. Indeed, surface acting has been linked to several negative outcomes, such as lower job satisfaction, higher levels of burnout, and intentions to quit (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Cote & Morgan, 2002; Grandey, 2003; Grandey, Fisk, & Steiner, 2005; Heuven & Bakker, 2003; Morris & Feldman, 1997).

Although prior research has not explicitly examined the link between Machiavellianism and surface acting, there is substantial reason to believe that Machs would be prone to engaging in surface acting on a regular basis. First, Machs are often referred to as social chameleons due to
their ability to assume the characteristics of their surroundings in order to manipulate the situation to their favor (O’Boyle et al., 2011). Thus, Machs engage in strategic self-presentation in order to influence people and situations (Christie & Geis, 1970; Snell, Sydell, & Lueke, 1999). Machiavellianism has indeed been linked to self-monitoring, a character trait that involves conforming to one’s environment in order to blend in (Bolino & Turnley, 2003). Research has also suggested that self-monitors tend to surface act, further substantiating the link between Machiavellianism and surface acting (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003; Ozcelik, 2012).

Moreover, Machs would not likely be authentic with their colleagues. In fact, it has been empirically demonstrated that Machs are unlikely to reciprocate trust when it has been extended to them, suggesting that even when others are sincere with them, Machs would not respond similarly (Gunnthorsdottir et al., 2002). In addition, research has supported the idea that Machs are generally unlikely to self-disclose (Domelsmith & Dietch, 1978; Brown & Guy, 1983; Hegarty & Sims, 1978). As discussed previously, Machiavellianism has been linked to lying. Geis and Moon (1981) reasoned that Machs make more believable liars because of their ability to maintain a calm façade, suggesting that Machs can believably “act” an emotion. Thus, Machs might use lying as a tool to mask their true feelings. Further, Ozcelik (2012) suggested that individuals whose goals may be incongruent with those of the organization also frequently surface act. Machs fit this criteria well; they are self-interested by nature and are likely to have a personal agenda unrelated to the goals of the organization.

Therefore, it is evident that Machs would not dissolve the façade they portray to others, even in organizational climates that value authenticity. In fact, these authentic and supportive environments might actually instigate Machs to surface act in order to superficially fulfill the
authenticity requirement that is imposed upon them. Given the evidence discussed, I expect Machiavellianism to be positively associated with surface acting.

**Hypothesis 2:** Machiavellianism will be positively related to surface acting.

Although Machs are expected to engage in social undermining and surface acting, I am proposing that certain climates, particularly ones that share sensitive information openly without interpersonal risk, make these outcomes more possible. Thus, Machiavellian engagement in social undermining and surface acting is contingent upon a high degree of psychological safety, which can be explained by trait activation theory.

**Work Context and Machiavellianism: A Trait-Activation Theory Perspective**

Tett and Gutterman’s (2000) Trait-Activation Theory states that “the behavioral expression of a trait requires arousal of that trait by trait-relevant situational cues” (p. 398). This theory suggests that dispositional traits are activated to the extent that the environment allows for such behavior. Thus, a trait manifests itself if the situation prompts trait-relevant behavior. As an example, an individual who tends to be highly anxious would behave more anxiously when the situation elicits it (e.g., the person is under deadline). In the same vein, certain organizational climates, specifically ones that allow room for interpretation, may unintentionally allow duplicitous behavior from employees. For instance, a climate of informality, one that does not impose strict rules regarding dress, speech and emotional expression, may unwittingly activate negative affectivity and thus permit incivility in the workplace (Andersson & Pearson, 1999).

Consistent with trait activation theory, I propose that organizational contexts that are information rich (i.e., promote the share of interpersonal information amongst colleagues) may unwittingly trigger a Mach’s exploitative tendencies. More specifically, the information afforded to Machs in such contexts both activates their duplicitous nature and equips them with a means
to exploit their colleagues. This is in accordance with Christie and Geis’s (1970) original argument that Machiavellian activity is more likely to occur in certain contexts over others.

**Context Moderators of Machiavellian Behavior**

Past scholars have noted that a Machiavellian orientation does not invariably lead to real-world success but instead is largely context dependent (Wilson et al., 1996). Accordingly, a meta-analytic study identified a weak negative relationship between Machiavellianism and job performance, although the 80% credibility interval included zero. This indicates that the negative relationship is not stable across populations, signaling moderators (O’Boyle et al., 2011). Thus, Machs tend to achieve their goals under conditions that explicitly or implicitly allow them to behave freely.

Christie and Geis (1970) noted that environments that allow latitude for improvisation are conducive to Machiavellian activity. Subsequent research generally agrees with this contention. In a field study of male retail managers, Gable et al. (1992) examined whether Machs would achieve higher job performance when they perceived their supervisor as initiating a loosely structured work environment. An employee perceived their work environment as loosely structured if clear standards of performance were not enforced, deadlines were not stressed, or the use of consistent work procedures was not encouraged. The authors confirmed that male Machiavellian employees were higher performers (as measured by gross margin percent, sales per square foot, and inventory turnover) when they perceived their supervisor as initiating a loose work structure. In contrast, when Machiavellian employees perceived a highly structured work environment, there was a null relationship with job performance.

Similarly, Shultz (1993) conducted a field study which determined whether loosely structured sales firms allowed Machs to earn more money from sales commissions and maintain
more clients than low Machs. Loosely structured sales firms were operationalized as having low hierarchy, high managerial span of control, vague or no rules, and high decision-making power. It was found that Machs significantly outperformed low-Machs in this type of environment. Shultz (1993) reasoned that low structure allows Machs to improvise and manipulate events or others, which leads to more clients and higher sales.

Sparks (1994) tried to replicate these findings by observing the moderating role of latitude for improvisation between Machiavellianism and personal success (as measured by income and job title) in a sample of marketers. Sparks (1994) found that high latitude for improvisation did not lead to Machiavellian success, contrary to previous findings. Rather, low latitude for improvisation prevented success for some. The author reasoned that highly structured environments may prevent the success of Machiavellian marketers’ ability to manipulate others, which may lead to subpar performance appraisals, and ultimately lower pay and status. Although Sparks’ (1994) results contradict past findings, he argued that this might be an artifact of the sample (i.e., marketing researchers may not necessarily need room to improvise in their work), the measurement of latitude for improvisation (i.e., past studies have used different measures), or the operationalization of success (i.e., past studies have used different proxies for success).

Overall, the research generally agrees that Machs succeed in contexts that allow them to behave freely. It may also be that a Mach’s success depends on an ability to gather interpersonally risky information from colleagues. When Machs are privy to this kind of information, they are likely to use it for exploitative purposes. A climate high on psychological safety can grant them this type of information, thereby activating their exploitative nature and promoting engagement in sabotage behaviors against colleagues.

Psychological Safety as a Moderator
When Machs are given task-based or emotion-based information about a colleague that is threatening to the colleague’s reputation, the Mach’s exploitative tendencies may be activated, as suggested by trait activation theory. Thus, a necessary condition for Machs to engage in social undermining is a climate that promotes self-disclosure and authentic expression amongst employees. Likewise, climates of high psychological safety may be particularly ripe for Machiavellian engagement in social undermining behaviors, as the sensitive information shared freely amongst members is likely to be perceived as capital to gain a competitive advantage over other members. Psychological safety may also promote surface acting for Machs, as they would need to maintain a guise of authenticity to blend in such a climate.

Psychological safety is defined by Kahn (1990) as “feeling able to show and employ one’s self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career” (p. 708). Kahn (1990) found that interpersonal relationships promoted psychological safety when they were supportive and trusting. He explained that psychological safety existed when “members shared ideas and concepts…without feeling that it was dangerous to do so; they felt that any criticism would be constructive rather than destructive” (p. 708). Furthermore, a psychologically safe environment permits individuals to incorporate their personalities, creativity, emotions, and self-concepts into their work roles, allowing them to become engaged in their work (Kahn, 1990; Brown & Leigh, 1996). Edmondson (1999) later added that such a climate implies assurance “that the team will not embarrass, reject, or punish someone for speaking up” (p.354).

Research has consistently linked psychological safety to beneficial outcomes. For example, Brown and Leigh (1996) illustrated that a psychologically safe environment leads to greater job involvement, effort, and ultimately, performance. Moreover, Bradley, Postlethwaite, Klotz, Hamdani, and Brown (2012) found that psychological safety facilitates the relationship
between task conflict and performance, such that task conflict improved team performance when psychological safety was high. The authors argued that “psychological safety may amplify the involvement of each team member and the intensity of interaction among teammates without endangering the harmony of the team, thereby increasing team performance” (p. 151). A consistent trend found in research is that psychological safety also enhances team-learning behavior (Edmondson, 1999; Kostopoulos & Bozionelos, 2011; Kessel et al., 2012) and promotes creativity (Kark & Carmeli, 2009; Kessel et al., 2012).

While research has illustrated psychological safety to be related to beneficial team outcomes, researchers have recently acknowledged that the advantages of psychological safety depend on the characteristics of the members. For example, Pearsall and Ellis (2011) found that if a team is high on psychological safety, and is comprised of individuals espousing utilitarian views, then members are more likely to make unethical decisions. Utilitarian individuals tend to make ends-based decisions, reasoning that rules can be altered if it benefits the greater good. With such a mindset, utilitarian individuals are predisposed to engaging in ethically questionable behavior (e.g., Reynolds, 2006; Reynolds & Ceramic, 2007). Pearsall and Ellis (2011) demonstrated that, in a group setting, utilitarian individuals are likely to voice ethically questionable suggestions if only the climate is psychologically safe to do so (i.e., members feel they will not be judged or rejected). Indeed, the authors ultimately claimed that “psychological safety may have the unintended consequence of contributing to the incidence of behaviors that are detrimental to the long-term success of the organization” (p. 407).

Thus, psychological safety, which has been shown to have positive outcomes in the workplace, might have unintended consequences if there are Machs present, as the situational cues are likely to arouse a Mach’s exploitative tendencies. Such a climate provides Machs with
potentially damaging information about their colleagues, which they can use to threaten their colleagues’ social status in order to secure their own success. Consider a scenario in which an employee discloses to a Machiavellian colleague that she made a mistake (task-based information) or that she hates her job (emotion-based information). A Mach, duplicitous and exploitative by nature, would likely use this information as capital by perhaps relaying it to an individual of authority. By revealing this information to, for example, a manager, the colleague’s relationship with management is jeopardized, and the Mach is presumably at a competitive advantage relative to the colleague. In this type of climate, Machs are akin to wolves preying on their sheeplike colleagues.

From this example, it is evident why a psychologically safe climate may be more conducive to Machiavellian activity; it promotes the share of potentially sensitive task-based and emotion-based information amongst members. The self-disclosure that characterizes a psychologically safe climate may be the mechanism by which Machs engage in exploitative behavior. Trait-activation theory supports this assumption; environments that promote the transfer of sensitive personal information would arouse a Mach’s natural tendency to behave exploitatively. More specifically, Machs would be more likely to social undermine when the climate is psychologically safe (i.e., promotes authenticity amongst employees).

**Hypothesis 3a:** Psychological safety moderates the relationship between Machiavellianism and social undermining, such that Machs engage in more social undermining under climates of high psychological safety than under climates of low psychological safety.

It is important to note that although Machs would likely reap information from colleagues, they would not particularly be willing to admit their own mistakes or share how they
feel, as it has been established that Machs are generally unwilling to self-disclose. For example, in a study of business students’ ethical practices, it was found that Machs were unlikely to share knowledge as compared to other study participants (Hegarty & Sims, 1978). Consistently, Machiavellianism was found to be significantly correlated with a refusal to self-disclose (Domelsmith & Dietch, 1978). More recently, Liu (2008) corroborated these findings and indicated that Machiavellianism is negatively correlated with knowledge-sharing willingness, as Machs are likely to view knowledge as a competitive advantage and are not likely to share it. This then begs the question if a Mach’s exploitative nature would be detected by colleagues if they are not revealing information like everyone else. As discussed above, this type of self-disclosure environment would likely promote surface acting in Machs. Machs would surface act in order to maintain a guise of authenticity to fit in with colleagues, with the aim of establishing “powerful social networks, gain[ing] the trust and respect of coworkers, and extract[ing] desired outcomes” (O’Boyle et al., 2011, p. 3). Therefore, a Mach, in a psychologically safe climate, may superficially disclose information for the sake of blending in, lulling colleagues into a false sense of confidentiality, and ultimately exploiting them.

Supporting this contention, Steinel, Utz, & Koning (2010) conducted a lab study in which participants, placed in either a pro-self or pro-social motivation condition, played an information-pooling game. It was found that individuals placed in a pro-self condition would strategically conceal and even lie about important information. However, when they realized that sharing information was to their own benefit, they would share unimportant information in order to elicit information from others. While this study did not explicitly examine Machiavellianism, it illustrates that self-interested individuals, like Machs, can portray a guise of cooperativeness
when it is to their benefit. This finding parallels this study’s argument that Machs would be likely to superficially share information for the purpose of blending in.

Providing further support for Mach’s propensity towards surface acting, Ozcelik (2012) explained that “employees have an intrinsic drive to continually assess their environment for cues signaling social approval or disapproval and adjust their emotional expressions in light of these cues” (p. 293). Ozcelik’s (2012) argument is germane to the present discussion; in an environment that promotes self disclosure, Machs would suspect that they will gain disapproval if they do not conform to their surroundings, eliciting them to alter their emotional expressions (i.e., surface act). Trait activation theory once again supports this argument; when Machs realize authenticity is expected of them, their tendency to surface act will be activated. To expand upon the wolf analogy presented earlier, Machs, in a psychologically safe climate, are wolves in sheep’s clothing, superficially supportive and willing to share information, but inherently conniving and calculating. I am thus arguing that psychological safety prompts a Mach to surface act in order to conform to his or her surroundings.

**Hypothesis 3b:** Psychological safety moderates the relationship between Machiavellianism and surface acting, such that Machs surface act more under climates of high psychological safety.

**Summary**

Previous research has consistently linked Machiavellianism to unethical behaviors, especially under open conditions with room to improvise. Indeed, trait-activation theory proposes that environmental stimuli may spur an individual’s natural traits to manifest themselves. I am suggesting that a climate of psychological safety, which promotes authentic
expression amongst members without interpersonal risk, is vulnerable to Machiavellian engagement in social undermining and surface acting.
Chapter 2

METHODS AND RESULTS: PILOT STUDY

Sample and Procedures

The pilot study was conducted using MBA students working on a semester-long project. This was a viable setting for two important reasons. First, given that Machs tend to gravitate towards business careers (Skinner, Giokas, & Hornstein, 1976; Wertheim, Widom, & Wortzel, 1978; Steinunger & Eisenberg, 1976; Chonko, 1982), this sample should have greater likelihood of Machiavellianism traits than the typical population. Second, the time-lagged design afforded group members sufficient time to form perceptions about their group and engage in relevant behaviors. For example, unit level perceptions such as psychological safety take considerable time to develop (e.g., Edmondson, 1999). Similarly, Duffy et al. (2002) were clear in their original conceptualization of social undermining in that its effects occur incrementally and manifest over time.

I recruited participants from a sample of 80 first-year MBA students during a program orientation session. I explained that the goal of the study was to better understand group dynamics in an MBA setting. They were told that three surveys would be emailed to them at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester, respectively, each of them taking about 10-20 minutes to complete. In return for participation, students were offered feedback about their own traits and group processes compared to their MBA cohort, and entered in a drawing for four $25 gift cards to a local restaurant. Participation in the study was verbally encouraged by the director and by faculty of the program throughout the semester. Students were assigned into 16 groups of four working on an interdependent semester-long project where they were expected to meet during and outside of class time.
Confidentiality was also guaranteed; student responses did not include identifying information, except for their email if they chose to be entered into the gift card drawing. Their emails were not used for any other purpose. They were also ensured that individual level responses would only be viewed by the researcher and not by their professor.

**Time 1.** During the first week of the semester (Time 1), the administrative staff in the MBA department emailed the first survey to the students. This survey first prompted them to generate a unique identification (ID) code that they would enter in each subsequent survey to link the surveys together while protecting anonymity. The first survey contained a series of personality measures (e.g., Machiavellianism, Big Five), which took about 10 minutes to complete. This step yielded 40 responses (50% response rate).

**Time 2.** Two months later, at the midpoint of the semester (Time 2) during a weeklong break in coursework, students were administered the second survey, which measured perceptions of their group (e.g., psychological safety), as well as behaviors with groups (social undermining and surface acting). To increase sample size, students were offered the opportunity to also take the Time 1 survey at this time. Thirty-one respondents completed the Time 2 survey, which is a 39% response rate, and of these, seven participants also completed the Time 1 survey, resulting in 47 total responses and raising the overall response rate of Time 1 to 59%. Of these 31 Time 2 respondents, 28 matched the Time 1 survey.

**Time 3.** During the last week of the semester (Time 3), the final survey was administered. Time 3 resulted in 27 total participants (34% response rate for Survey 3), with 15 participants who responded to all three time points (19% overall three-wave response rate). Analyses that were run only included the 15 participants to all three time points to maintain the
time-lagged design of the study. Note that, while Time 1 and Time 2 surveys were collected at separate time points, only one participant completed both during Time 2.

Sample

Fifteen students participated to all three surveys. The mean age of participants was 26 (SD = 3.49), and 53.3% of participants were female. In terms of ethnicity, 60% of the same was White, nearly 34% was Asian, and nearly 7% identified as “other.”

Measures

Machiavellianism. Dahling et al.’s (2009) Machiavellian Personality Scale was used to determine each participant’s level of Machiavellianism at Time 1. A sample item reads: “I am willing to sabotage the efforts of other people if they threaten my own goals” (alpha=.89). The measure is a 16-item Likert-type scale that ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Psychological safety. Edmondson’s (1999) psychological safety measure for the team climate was measured at Time 2. A sample item reads: “if you make a mistake on this team, it is often held against you” (alpha=.70). The measure is a 7-item Likert-type scale that ranges from 1 (very inaccurate) to 7 (very accurate).

Social undermining. Social undermining was assessed using a modified version of Duffy et al.’s (2002) scale at Time 3. A sample item from this survey reads “how often have you intentionally delayed work to make someone else look bad or slow them down” (alpha= .80). The measure is a 13-item Likert-type scale that ranges from 1 (never) to 6 (everyday). Several studies (Duffy et al., 2002; Duffy et al. 2006, Greenbaum et al., 2006; Greenbaum et al., 2012) using this scale have asked participants to rate the social undermining behaviors of specific coworkers, supervisors or subordinates. In the present study, I wanted to link employee traits
with their own propensity towards social undermining. To that end, participants rated the degree to which they personally engage in social undermining. This is appropriate, given that these behaviors are often covert and difficult to detect by others.

Perceptions of members’ social undermining were also assessed at Time 3, to assess if Machs are more likely to perceive undermining as a ‘norm’. Participants were asked to rate how often they perceived others in their team to engage in social undermining (alpha = .88.)

**Surface acting.** Surface acting was measured at Time 3 using Grandey et al.’s (2005) composite scale, created by combining items from Grandey’s (2003) and Brotheridge and Lee’s (2003) respective scales. The measure asked participants “when interacting with your team members, how often do you actually do the following behaviors during a typical work day?,” and the response scale ranged from 1 (never/not at all) to 5 (always/constantly). Example surface acting items are, “I put on a mask in order to display the emotions I needed to for my job” and “I just pretended to have the emotions I needed to display for my job” (alpha = .88).

**Control Variables.** The focal participant's tenure (in years), gender (1 = male, 2 = female), neuroticism (using Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swan, 2003’s two-item measure; alpha = .62) was measured because these variables may impact an individual’s predisposition to engage in social undermining. For example, Duffy et al. (2002) recommended controlling negative affectivity and tenure when examining social undermining behaviors, as these factors may influence how one perceives social interactions at work. Furthermore, gender has also been found to relate to various counterproductive work behaviors (Bayram, Gursakal, & Bilgel, 2009). Similarly, in a review of the Machiavellian literature, Wilson et al. (19960 found age and gender to influence individual’s levels of Machiavellianism.

**Results and Discussion**
Due to the small final sample size, only individual-level descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations were examined to preliminarily determine whether the proposed main effect relationships are supported. Descriptive statistics, scale reliabilities, and correlations are presented in Table 1. The table reports correlations between Machiavellianism measured at Time 1 with social undermining (Hypothesis 1) and surface acting (Hypothesis 2) at Time 3. Given the small sample size and likelihood of making a Type I error, I used $p$ value of .10 to determine significance and whether the predictions were supported. Contrary to predictions, Machiavellianism was not significantly related to social undermining ($r = .43, p = .11$), although this relationship was positive as expected and trending towards significance. In support of Hypothesis 2, Machiavellianism was positively and significantly related to surface acting ($r = .44, p < .10$).

It is important to note that these strong correlations were present even though they were measured at three points in time, minimizing shared method variance as the explanation for the relationships. However, it is possible that these relationships are inflated due to these individual responses being nested in teams, and thus not being independent from each other. Thus, these relationships should be probed further using multilevel statistical techniques that account for team membership.

Hypothesis 3 predicted a moderation effect, which cannot be rigorously tested with traditional methods (e.g., Baron & Kenny, 1986) with the small sample. In an exploratory way, a median split analysis was performed to determine if Machiavellianism was differentially related to social undermining and surface acting depending on individual level of psychological safety.
The results revealed that Machs were more likely to social undermine \((r = .65, p < .10)\) and surface act \((r = .70, p < .05)\) when they perceived high amounts of psychological safety (equal to or above the mean of 4; \(n = 9\)). In contrast, they were much less likely to social undermine \((r = .51, p > .10)\) and surface act \((r = .35, p > .10)\) when they perceived psychological safety to be low (below the mean of 4; \(n = 6\)). This pattern is depicted in Figure 2.

As an exploratory question, I examined whether Machs were more likely to report social undermining behaviors performed by their peers. As presented in Table 1, the relationship was positive as expected \((r = .25, p > .10)\), although failed to reach significance.

These findings provide tentative support for the model presented; Machs were more likely to engage in social undermining and surface acting when they perceived psychological safety to be high rather than low. Overall, this study attempted to obtain three-waves of data to minimize shared method variance and capture the nature of norms and behaviors over time, but ended up with the serious limitations of small sample size and non-independent data. I address these concerns in a second round of data collection with a larger field sample.

METHODS: MAIN STUDY

Sample and Procedures

A university organization that specializes in education and technology that has about 250 employees organized into about 12 work units was recruited for this study in exchange for an aggregated report on our findings. The applied setting of this sample, as opposed to the pilot student sample, should be more generalizable to other working contexts. To incentivize participation, unit-level feedback was offered to the organization and participants were entered into a drawing for three $25 gift cards to a local restaurant. Confidentiality was also guaranteed;
employee responses did not include identifying information, except for their email if they chose to be entered into the gift card drawing. Their emails were not used for any other purpose. They were also ensured that individual level responses would only be viewed by the researcher and not by management.

Employees at the organization were sent an email about the study from the organization’s administrative office by the vice president of human resources for this organization and encouraged to participate. They were given two full weeks to complete the survey, and were sent two reminders during that time. With 187 total responses, about 75% of the organization participated, representing all 12 units. Unit responses ranged from two to 39, with average unit response rate of about 15 members. The sample was 96% White, 1.5% Black, and 2.5% were either Hispanic, Asian/Indian/Pacific Islander, or other. In terms of gender, 72% was female, while 28% was male. Average tenure was 4.7 years ($SD = 4.9$).

**Measures**

The same measures described above for the MBA sample were once again used. Alpha values are presented below in Table 2.
Chapter 3

RESULTS

Means, standard deviations, correlations, and scale reliabilities are reported in Table 2. The mean level of Machiavellianism in this sample (1.90) was somewhat lower than the MBA sample (2.50). Other reported studies of Machiavellianism have traditionally used Christie and Geis’s (1970) Mach IV scale, which is scored from 40-160, making a direct comparison to the present sample difficult. However, other studies that have used a 1-5 scale such as this one typically report values around three (Bloodgood, Turnley, & Mudrack, 2010; Bolino & Turnley, 2003). Social undermining was somewhat higher in this sample (2.18), than the MBA sample (1.47), as well as other reported studies of social undermining, which ranged from about 1.54 to 1.76 (Greenbaum et al., 2012; Duffy et al., 2006). Mean levels of surface acting were also somewhat higher in this sample (3.23) as compared to the MBA sample (2.71), but similar to the levels found in other work samples (e.g., Grandey, Foo, Groth & Goodwin, 2012; Ozcelik, 2012; Grandey, 2003).

Hypothesis 1, which stated that Machiavellianism will be positively related to social undermining, was supported ($r = .15, p < .05$). Hypothesis 2, which stated that Machiavellianism will be positively related surface acting, was also supported ($r = .17, p < .05$). Given that these relationships were measured at the same point in time, it is possible that they can be attributable to common method variance (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Podsakoff, & Lee, 2003). It was therefore important to control for any third variable that may be related to both predictor and outcome.

To check whether Machiavellianism was related to social undermining and surface acting while controlling for tenure, gender, and neuroticism, multiple regression was performed. As
reported in Table 3, when the effects of tenure, gender, and neuroticism were added to the equation, the Machiavellianism-social undermining relationship was no longer significant \( (p = .11) \) and Machiavellianism-surface acting relationship also became non-significant \( (p = .20) \). Thus, the relationships of Machiavellianism with social undermining and surface acting may be primarily due to the effect of tenure, gender, and neuroticism.

Hypothesis 3 posited that psychological safety would exacerbate the positive relationship between Machiavellianism and social undermining (H3a) and Machiavellianism and surface acting (H3b). These relationships were examined using two methods: individual-level linear regression and hierarchical linear modeling (HLM).

**Individual-level regression.** First, it was examined whether an individual’s level of Machiavellianism interacted with their perception of psychological safety (i.e., the degree to which they perceived their unit to be psychologically safe) to determine levels of social undermining and surface acting. To do this, scores of Machiavellianism and psychological safety were mean centered and a subsequent interaction term was created, consistent with the suggestions of Aiken and West (1991). Each of the outcome variables was regressed on the interaction terms, after the control variables (tenure, gender, and neuroticism) and the two main effects (Machiavellianism and psychological safety) were added. Table 4 reports the results of this regression analysis. Providing support to Hypothesis 3a, Machiavellianism and psychological safety interacted to determine social undermining, \( (\beta = -.17, p < .05) \). This interaction is depicted in Figure 3. Based on the shape of the interaction, it seems that, contrary to the prediction of Hypothesis 3a, Machs are more likely to social undermine when they perceive psychological safety to be low, instead of high. That is, perception of psychological
safety acts as a buffer against a Mach’s propensity to social undermine coworkers. A simple slopes analysis revealed that the slope is significant at one standard deviation below the mean of psychological safety \((t = 2.35, p < .05)\). However, the slope at one standard deviation above the mean of psychological safety is nonsignificant \((t = -1.01, p > .05)\). Contrary to Hypothesis 3b, the interaction term of Machiavellianism with psychological safety was not statistically significant for surface acting \((\beta = -.03, p = .61)\).

Hierarchical linear modeling. The second set of analyses is more conservative, as it takes into account the nested nature of the data (individuals in units), and determines whether the aggregated group climate (rather than individual perception of climate) would predict a Mach’s inclination towards social undermining and surface acting. Once again, \(p\) value of below .10 was used to determine significance due to the small number of units \((n = 12)\).

Before hypothesis testing, I examined whether there was statistical evidence to support aggregating the psychological safety to the unit level of analysis. More specifically, I tried to ascertain whether (a) levels of psychological safety had sufficient between-unit variance, (b) units could be reliably differentiated, and (c) unit members agreed on the level of psychological safety (Bliese, 2000). To determine this information, I calculated intraclass correlations, \(ICC(1)\) and \(ICC(2)\), as well as \(r_{wg(j)}\). Bliese (2000) argued that \(ICC(1)\) values typically fall between .05-.20, and Glick (1985) recommended \(ICC(2)\) values to meet a minimum of .60.

\(ICC(1)\) is the proportion of variance in individual responses that is explained by unit membership. For psychological safety, \(ICC(1) = .14, F = 2.98, p < .01\), suggesting that 14% of
the variance in individual responses was attributable to the work unit in which they belonged. 

*ICC(2)* is the reliability of the unit scores, or the extent to which units can be reliably distinguished. *ICC(2) = .66* for psychological safety, indicating that the units reliably differed in their mean level of psychological safety. Consistent with the suggestions of Bliese (2000) and Glick (1985), the *ICC(1) and (2)* values for psychological safety were justified for aggregation to the team level.

I computed *r* sub *wg*(j) values for psychological safety for each unit to determine the extent to which individuals within a given unit agreed on psychological safety climate. The mean *r* sub *wg*(j) for all 12 units was .63, which meets the minimum threshold determined by Glick (1985). Of the 12 units, nine illustrated acceptable agreement (.7 or above), and three did not. One unit demonstrated very low agreement (.13), while two units had values that were out of bounds (i.e., did not fall between 0 and 1) and were thus set to zero (James Demaree, & Wolf, 1993). Despite the apparent low agreement in these groups, I retained them for analysis for two important reasons. First, the mean *r* sub *wg*(j) for all 12 units met the previously accepted .60 standard set by Glick (1985). Second, when discussing the issue of low agreement, LeBreton and Senter (2008) argued that “losing potentially valuable data is never recommended” (p. 838). They suggested that as long as some of the groups demonstrate adequate agreement, then all groups could still be aggregated. In summary, these results provide evidence that psychological safety exists at the unit level of analysis in this sample, supporting the assumption that psychological safety represents shared perceptions.

Because psychological safety, a unit level variable, is proposed to moderate individual level-relationships, hierarchical linear modeling is necessary to test these hypotheses. Multilevel modeling was performed using Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) (Bryk & Raudenbush,
I first computed null models for social undermining and surface acting. As demonstrated in Table 5, nearly 0% of the variance in both outcome variables is due to group membership. Although this suggests that the intercepts of the outcome variable are statistically identical across groups, there may still be sufficient variance in slopes across groups (Hoffman, Griffin, & Gavin, 2000).

I then proceeded to testing the substantive models. Consistent with the suggestions of Enders and Tofighi (2007), the Level 1 predictors (Machiavellianism and control variables) were centered at the means of each unit. Doing so “yields a pure estimate of the moderating influence that a level 2 predictor exerts on the level 1 association between X and Y” (Enders & Tofighi, 2007, p. 133). The Level 2 variable, psychological safety, was grand mean centered.

To test the hypothesized moderating effect of psychological safety, I regressed each outcome variable on the predictor variables, including control variables. The results are depicted in Table 6. Contradictory to Hypothesis 3, the results reveal that these slopes of these relationships do not significantly differ based on psychological safety for social undermining (γ = -.08, p > .05) or surface acting (γ = .07, p > .05). These results are depicted in Table 6 and Table 7.

Since the unit-level perceptions of climate did not moderate the individual level relationships, it was important to ascertain whether the individual-level moderating effect found
in the regression could be replicated when taking into account the nested nature of the data. I used HLM to replicate the previous finding that Machiavellianism interacted with individual perception of psychological safety to determine social undermining (see Table 8). Supporting the earlier finding, the interaction term yielded a significant effect ($\gamma = -0.10$, $p < .00$), even when taking into account the group membership of the individual respondents. As compared to the null model, this model explains 42.5% of the variance in social undermining. When plotted, the interaction looked identical to the one yielded from the individual-level regression analysis, confirming my original findings (see Figure 4).

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Insert Table 8 about here
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Insert Figure 4 about here
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**Exploratory Analyses**

My primary focus was determining if Machiavellianism interacted with psychological safety to determine social undermining, but I also explored whether the relationship depended on other cues of social status, given that Machs tend to employ undermining to get ahead. My analyses revealed that gender exerted an interactive influence with Machiavellianism on social undermining. As depicted in Table 9, a linear ($\beta = .63$, $p = .05$) regression analysis revealed that gender and Machiavellianism interacted to predict engagement in social undermining. As can be seen in Figure 5, Mach females tended to engage in substantially more social undermining than low-Mach females and all males. A simple slopes analysis revealed that the female slope is significant ($t = 2.44$, $p < .05$), while the male slope is nonsignificant ($t = -.15$, $p > .05$).
Discussion

This study drew on trait activation theory to suggest that climates that encourage group members to share sensitive or personally risky information would activate the self-serving nature of Machs and encourage them to engage in socially deviant behavior. Indeed, prior research has found that Machs rely on loosely structured environments in order to succeed on the job (Gable et al., 1992; Shultz, 1993; Sparks, 1994). Environments that do not impose strict limitations (in terms of rules and regulations) presumably allow Machs to engage in ethically questionable, and potentially deviant, behaviors to succeed at work. Following this rationale, I suggested that psychologically safe climates, ones that support members sharing sensitive interpersonal information with one another, would then be used by Machs to undermine and create the need to fake this persona with the group.

The MBA sample provides tentative support to these propositions. In a time-lagged design, it was confirmed that Machiavellianism is related to both social undermining and surface acting, albeit with marginal significance. A median split also revealed that these relationships are strengthened when perception of psychological safety climate was high. Contrary to expectations, Machs were not likely to perceive more social undermining as performed by their peers. This is contrary to past research suggesting that Machs are likely to perceive climates to be political (Ferris, Adams, Kolodinsku, Hochwawrter, & Ammeter, 2002; Atinc, Darrat, Fuller, & Parker, 2010). However, in this study, they were able to distinguish between their own social undermining behaviors and those performed by their peers.
The results of the main study suggest an alternative story. Lending partial support to the first two hypotheses, the results suggest that Machiavellianism is positively related to social undermining and surface acting, although these relationships become nonsignificant when tenure, gender, and neuroticism are controlled. In general, more neurotic persons are likely to agree that they are high Machs and that they undermine, creating a spurious relationship. Moreover, the weak relationships may be due to the presence of moderators.

It was found that individual perceptions (but not unit perceptions) of psychological safety moderate the relationship of Machiavellianism and social undermining. Contrary to predictions, perception of psychological safety constrains or neutralizes the link between Machiavellianism and social undermining. In contrast, a perception of an unsafe team might prompt Machs to social undermine. An ad hoc analysis also revealed that women who are Machiavellian are more likely to engage in social undermining than men. Overall, this suggests that Mach tendencies are not sufficient to engage in socially undermining behaviors with one’s group members; instead, it may depend on the social context and norms as suggested by psychological safety and gender.

The somewhat discrepant findings between the two studies can be explained by the contrasting contexts. In the MBA setting, students work together over the span of a year, after which they change groups. Thus, relationships that form may be more transactional, in that they are limited in duration and for the sole purpose of accomplishing a project. Therefore, Machs may be more inclined to exploiting the safety of the climate. On the other hand, university education employees may harbor more relational, long-term bonds with one another, and thus, psychological safety may not translate to sabotage behaviors. Alternatively, these contrasting
results may simply be artifactually due to the vastly different sample sizes. Nonetheless, the findings of both studies have several theoretical and practical implications.

**Theoretical Implications**

This study tentatively confirmed that Machs are likely to engage in two undesirable behaviors, namely social undermining and surface acting. Furthermore, as suggested by trait activation theory, certain situations can either elicit or disarm a Mach’s propensity towards deviance.

A major contribution of this study is that it adds to our understanding of when Machs are likely to be most “dangerous.” While it has been firmly established that Machs have a propensity to engage in interpersonally deviant behavior (e.g., Tang & Chen, 2007; Hegarty & Sims, 1979; Granitz, 2003; Gunnthorsdottir, McCabe, and Smith, 2002), this study enlightens us to conditions that can attenuate or exacerbate this relationship.

More specifically, the findings suggest that a psychologically safe climate, as perceived by a Mach, can serve as a buffer against a Mach’s inclination towards social undermining. Furthermore, although past researchers have called Machs self-presenters, social chameleons, and self-monitors (O’Boyle et al., 2011; Bolino & Turnley, 2003), no empirical research has explicitly examined the link between Machiavellianism and surface acting, and this study tentatively establishes that relationship.

While this study adds to a long line of research highlighting the benefits of psychological safety in teams, it is among the first to report a buffering effect against interpersonal deviance. Research has found psychological safety to promote beneficial team outcomes, such as team learning behaviors (Edmondson, 1999; Kostopoulos & Bozionelos, 2011; Kessel et al., 2012) and creativity (Kark & Carmeli, 2009; Kessel et al., 2012). Similarly, climates that promote
authenticity have been found to enhance well-being at work (Grandey, et al., 2012). The current study suggests that psychological safety, at least as perceived by the member, can also deter Machs from engaging in interpersonally deviant behavior.

This study indicates that when Machs perceive their work unit to be psychologically safe, any natural impulses to exploit others may be deactivated. Although these results are contrary to my propositions, trait activation theory can explain the present findings, albeit not as originally argued. Instead of triggering a Mach’s self-serving tendencies, a perception of group cooperation may instead render a Mach’s self-serving tendencies dormant. Therefore, while psychologically safe environments are characterized by sensitive information share, thereby ripe for Machiavellian behavior, Machs are not likely to risk investing in sabotage behaviors if they determine that doing so will yield negative repercussions. In fact, despite the strong negative link that has been found between Machiavellianism and cooperativeness (Paal & Bereczkei, 2007), researchers have acknowledged that Machs can conform to group norms when it is to their benefit or the situation demands this type of manipulation. Likewise, Machs “often use the tool of misleading cooperation, especially in cases when cheating is too costly (e.g., the cheater is easy to identify) and cooperation yields a large benefit” (Czibor & Bereczkei, 2012, p. 202). The current study supports this notion, suggesting that Machs can put their deviant tactics to rest and comply with the cooperative and supportive norms that are characteristic of psychological safety, presumably because deviating can be too costly.

Other researchers have reported a similar trend that self-interested individual can behave collectivistically if doing so is personally beneficial. For example, Steinel, Utz, and Koning (2010) conducted a lab experiment in which participants played an information-pooling game where they were placed in either a pro-social or pro-self motivation condition. A notable finding
in their study is that, while pro-self individuals tended to conceal or even lie about information, they could also be induced to behave cooperatively (operationalized by sharing important information), but only if doing so had a direct benefit for themselves. The findings of this lab study are parallel to the current study in that, just as individuals in a pro-self condition could cooperate for strategic reasons, Machs could also suppress their tendency towards social undermining if it is unlikely to reap returns in a given context.

The fact that cooperative climates tend to deactivate a Mach’s exploitative nature may be precisely why Machs prefer competitive environments; they can capitalize on their natural instincts. Indeed, Machs have been found to consistently assume roles that allow competition. After surveying the literature, Fehr, Samsom, and Paulhus (1992) concluded that Machs tended to pursue business-oriented careers as opposed to helping careers. Presumably, Machs can implement their manipulative tactics in business careers, which tend to be characterized by competition, as opposed to more cooperative, helping careers, where their strategies would be fruitless. Accordingly, Kuyumcu and Dahling (in press) reported that Machiavellianism led to high managerial ratings of task performance ratings under situations of high organizational constraints and low performance ratings under conditions of low organizational constraints. The authors found that organizational constraints prompted Machs to engage in self-interested, careerist behaviors to outperform their colleagues. However, when constraints were low, Machs were limited to their superficial tactics that did not yield an advantage over their colleagues. Thus, Machs are high performers when they compete for resources, but low performers when resources are abundant. This research further emphasizes why Machs prefer competitive climates; they can succeed by employing their repertoire of illegitimate behaviors.
In the same vein, Verbeke, Ouwerkerk, and Peelen (1996) argued that Machs tend to be attracted towards competitive and unethical climates because “they can exercise unscrupulous behavior” (p. 1179). Indeed, in a sample of salespeople, the authors found that Machiavellianism tended to be higher in organizations operating in a competitive market, as well as in climates of low ethics and low internal communication. The authors draw on Schneider’s (1987) attraction, selection, attrition framework to suggest that Machs would not endure in climates of cooperation, ethics, and high internal communication. It may be that Machs avoid climates that promote sensitive information share (such as psychological safety) because they are expected to conform to a climate that is unnatural to them. Instead, they much prefer career paths and organizations that function competitively.

In addition to perceptions of psychological safety, this study found that gender also determines engagement in social undermining. Gender exerted both a main effect and interactive effect on social undermining, such that females were more likely than males to undermine; and this relationship was even stronger for Machiavellian females. While the literature generally suggests that males are more prone to counterproductive behaviors at work, much of this research is on aggressive behaviors (Neuman, 1998; Douglas & Martinko, 2001; Lau, Au, & Ho, 2003; Martinko, Douglas, & Harvey, 2006). In contrast, there is evidence to suggest that women engage in more covert forms of deviance that may be more difficult to trace back to the perpetrator. This tendency may be explained by women’s relative lower status in the workplace. While men typically “feel freer to violate organizational norms,” women are more reticent to do so because of their relative lack of power and their need to preserve a more communal image (Ferguson, Carlson, Hunter, & Whitten, 2012, p. 249). Eagly’s social role theory (1987) provides further justification for this phenomenon. Because women are expected to exhibit communal
behaviors, they would likewise refrain from engaging in blatant instances of aggression. Males, on the other hand, can comfortably display some aggression, so as to conform to the agenticism that is expected of them.

Likewise, it can be expected that women partake in more underhanded, covert forms of deviant behaviors (such as withholding information and gossiping), while men engage in more overt forms of deviant behaviors (such as direct aggression). Indeed, Bjorkqvist (1994) argued that men and women can be expected to develop differential strategies for attaining their goals. Empirically, indirect aggression has been linked significantly more to females than to males (Feshbach, 1969; Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, & Peltonen, 1988). Moreover, a review of sex differences in aggressive styles concluded that females tended to engage in more indirect aggressive behaviors, such as gossiping, ostracizing, and writing nasty notes (Bjorkvist, 1994). Similarly, in a study of adolescent girls, it was found that social manipulation was a more preferred form of aggression (Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz, & Kaukianen, 1992). Finally, in a study of covert aggression in the workplace, it was revealed that men engaged in more rational-appearing aggression while women engaged in more social manipulation behaviors (Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Lagerspetz, 1994). While both of these types of aggression are covert, women engaged in behaviors (e.g., spreading rumors) more akin to social undermining than men, supporting the present study.

The current findings bolster the notion that females, particularly Machiavellian females, tend to partake in covert forms of deviance. While Machiavellian males may have greater latitude to employ a repertoire of deviant behaviors, Machiavellian females likely limit themselves to discreet behaviors because they discern that it is least likely to rebound. Social undermining was conceptualized as a series of discreet and insidious actions, including behaviors
such as gossiping, spreading rumors, delaying work to make the target look bad, and giving the silent treatment. Relatively fewer items are direct, such as hurting someone’s feelings or belittling them. Thus, the finding that Machiavellian women were more likely to engage in social undermining is consistent with the broader literature of gender and aggression.

**Practical Implications**

This research has notable managerial implications. Social undermining can have dire personal and organizational consequences, including intentions to quit, depression, and decreased trust in supervisor (Duffy, et al., 2006). Thus, it is an activity that needs to be explicitly discouraged in the workplace. Indeed, Greenbaum et al. (2012) highlighted the need for researchers to identify factors associated with employee engagement in social undermining. Prior research has identified variables such as bottom-line thinking, envy, and Machiavellianism as precursors to this behavior. This study replicates the Machiavellianism-social undermining relationship (Greenbaum et al., 2012) with two unique samples, substantiating the previous claim that Machs are more likely to engage in this behavior. However, this study adds two important contextual features to that relationship. Namely, this relationship is positive only when the Mach perceives the climate to be psychologically unsafe and when the Mach is female.

This study suggests that climates of high psychological safety, as perceived by the Mach, can deter a Mach from engaging in social undermining. This finding underscores the benefit associated with psychological safety and should encourage managers to implement it within organizational units. However, it is important to note that, in this study’s sample, the unit-level psychological safety had no effect on a Mach’s tendency towards social undermining. Rather, it was a Mach’s own perception of psychological safety that prevents social undermining behaviors. This finding implies that managers need to convince Machiavellian employees that
the group norm is to be cooperative of one another. Admittedly, unit perception may not have exerted an influence on individual behavior simply because of the limited number of groups in this study \((n = 12)\), and thus, this finding should be interpreted cautiously, as discussed below.

Past researchers have also asserted that Machs should be hired with caution considering the damage they can cause. For example, Liu (2008) suggested that managers should be wary of hiring Machs if the organization encourages knowledge transfer. The present study contends that, when supportive norms are made clear to a Mach, then they pose no greater threat than a non-Mach. As discussed previously, this is consistent with literature illustrating that Machs can behave cooperatively if it is in their own best interest.

The proposed relationship between Machiavellianism and surface acting received weak support. This proposition implies that Machs are particularly likely to be insincere in climates that explicitly call for authenticity. This is one of the few studies that has considered surface acting with coworkers, as emotional labor research is usually conducted in the context of dealing with the general public (e.g., Diefendorff, Erickson, Grandey & Dahling, 2011). It seems likely that Machs would be perpetual surface actors, considering they are generally averse to conveying genuine emotion and possess a hidden agenda. Indeed, in a study of internal surface acting (that is, surface acting with coworkers), Ozcelik (2012) reported that affective congruence, goal congruence, and perceived self-value in organization are negative predictors of internal surface acting, while perceived organizational politics and self-monitoring were positive predictors. These predictors also paint the picture of a Mach, who tend to harbor goals that are discrepant from their organization, perceive workplaces to be inherently political, and engage in self-monitoring.
Researchers have explicitly called for ways to discourage surface acting in the workplace, as it can be taxing to the individual and bear negative consequences for the organization. For example, Grandey (2003) found that employees who surface acted had lower ratings of affective delivery (i.e., were perceived as insincere) and were more likely to “break character” (i.e., leak their true emotions). Similarly, Ozcelik (2012) found that, when surface acting with coworkers, individuals tended to be more emotionally exhausted and performed more poorly. In light of these findings, Grandey (2003) argued that deep acting is the more preferable method of emotional labor. Determining that Machs are surface actors can inform practitioners that they are not likely to contribute to an authentic environment and should therefore be screened out if authenticity is a value of the organization. Given that Machiavellianism was no longer related to surface acting in the presence of the control variables, this relationship should be probed in future research.

**Limitations and Future Directions**

This study is an important starting point for understanding when Machs are likely to “strike” and when they are most likely to be tame. However, the findings should be interpreted in light of several limitations. First, the sample of this study was relatively small ($n = 187$) and not very gender diverse (72% female). Relaterdly, only 12 units were examined. Thus, the lack of support for the multilevel hypothesis should be interpreted cautiously. Perhaps there simply was not enough variability to detect a significant moderating effect.

Second, this study was cross-sectional in design, limiting our ability to infer causality. Despite this concern, the study examined the relationship between a personality trait with two outcome behaviors. It would therefore be atheoretical to expect behaviors to predict a trait. The MBA study attempted to implement a time-lagged design; however, this study suffered heavy
attrition, and so the results should be cautiously interpreted. Relatedly, all measures were self-reported, and thus, the effects of common method variance cannot completely be ruled out (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Finally, only two outcome behaviors were examined in the current study (social undermining and surface acting), both of which received weak support. Future research should consider other forms of deviance Machs are likely to employ. In this study, Machiavellian females were found to engage in deviance, but not males. If more outwardly aggressive forms of deviance were examined, perhaps an opposite effect would be detected.

A fruitful avenue of future research concerns a Mach’s success in their engagement of social undermining, as well as other types of deviant behaviors. As previously discussed, social undermining can have negative consequences for the target and for the organization. However, if the Mach’s attempts at these behaviors are unsuccessful, then does the socially undermining behavior backfire? Researchers should try to ascertain if a Mach’s success in engaging in self-serving behaviors is contingent upon some type of cognitive ability or emotional intelligence. Austin et al. (2007) indicated that a Mach’s successful engagement in manipulative behavior has yet to be established. Côté, DeCelles, McCarthy, Van Kleef, and Hideg (2011) found that Machiavellianism coupled with emotional intelligence led to more interpersonal deviance than Machiavellianism alone. Thus, if Machs lack the skill to successfully manipulate others, then their attempts at getting ahead might essentially be in vain. Determining this would aid researchers to identify the extent to which Machs’ actions can truly be damaging.
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Sage.

Steinel, W., Utz, S., & Koning, L. (2010). The good, the bad and the ugly thing to do when sharing information: Revealing, concealing and lying depend on social motivation, distribution and importance of information. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 113*(2), 85–96.


Tett, R. P., & Gutterman, H. A. (2000). Situation trait relevance, trait expression, and cross-


Zettler, I., Friedrich, N., & Hilbig, B. E. (2011). Dissecting work commitment: the role of
Machiavellianism. *Career Development International*, 16(1), 20-35.
### Table 1

**MBA Study Correlations and Descriptive Statistics Between Time 1, Time 2, and Time 3**

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<th>Variables</th>
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<th>SD</th>
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<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
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<td>1. Gender&lt;sub&gt;T1&lt;/sub&gt;, m=1, f=2</td>
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<td>.52</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>(.55)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Machiavellianism&lt;sub&gt;T1&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
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<td>.57</td>
<td>-33</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>(.89)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Psychological Safety&lt;sub&gt;T2&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
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<td>.30</td>
<td>-.29</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>(.70)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>5. Social Undermining&lt;sub&gt;T3&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>.47</td>
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<td>6. Surface Acting&lt;sub&gt;T3&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>-.04</td>
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<td>.44†</td>
<td>-.39</td>
<td>.53*</td>
<td>(.88)</td>
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<td>7. Social Undermining-Other&lt;sub&gt;T3&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
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<td>-.23</td>
<td>.80**</td>
<td>.73**</td>
<td>(.88)</td>
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</table>

N=15

Reliabilities are reported along the diagonal

*<sup>p</sup> < .05, **<sup>p</sup> < .01, †<sup>p</sup> < .10

Note. When administered Time 2 survey, students were also given the option to take Time 1 survey. Seven participants took Time 1 and Time 2 simultaneously; although six of these responses were not used for the above analyses because they did not partake in the Time 3 Survey.
### Table 2

*Field Sample Correlations and Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
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<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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<td>(.83)</td>
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<td>-.18**</td>
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<td>-.19*</td>
<td>-.20**</td>
<td>(.88)</td>
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<td>6. Social Undermining</td>
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<td>.20**</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.15*</td>
<td>-.36*</td>
<td>(.72)</td>
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<td>.36**</td>
<td>.17*</td>
<td>-.49**</td>
<td>.52**</td>
<td>(.86)</td>
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N=187

* p < .05, **p<.01, †p<.10

Reliabilities are reported along the diagonal.
Table 3

Regression Analysis Results for Machiavellianism and Behaviors

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<th>Step and Variable</th>
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<th></th>
<th>Surface Acting</th>
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<tr>
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<td>$B$</td>
<td>SE $B$</td>
<td>$\beta$</td>
<td>$\Delta R^2$</td>
<td>$B$</td>
<td>SE $B$</td>
<td>$\beta$</td>
<td>$\Delta R^2$</td>
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<td>.03</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Gender</td>
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<td>.16</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.13</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.02</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.11**</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.15***</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>.10</td>
<td>.01</td>
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*p < .05, **p<.01, ***p<.000, †p<.10
### Table 4

*Regression Results for Psychological Safety and Machiavellianism Interaction*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step and Variable</th>
<th>Social Undermining</th>
<th></th>
<th>Surface Acting</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>β</td>
<td>ΔR²</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
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<td>- .01</td>
<td>.01</td>
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<td>.16</td>
<td>.28</td>
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<td>.13</td>
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<td>Neuroticism</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.11**</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.34</td>
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<td>Step 2</td>
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<td>.10</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.05</td>
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<td>.06</td>
<td>.27</td>
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<td>.06</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.03</td>
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<td>.02</td>
<td>-.37</td>
<td>.14**</td>
<td>-.31</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.41</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
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<td>.00</td>
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<td>- .01</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.05</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>.05</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.05</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Machiavellianism</td>
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<td>.06</td>
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<td>.02</td>
<td>-.37</td>
<td>.14**</td>
<td>-.31</td>
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<td>MachXPsychSafety</td>
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<td>-.17</td>
<td>.03*</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>-.03</td>
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</table>

* p < .05, ** p < .01, † p < .10
Table 5

Hierarchical Linear Modeling Estimates of Null Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Pooled Intercept ($\gamma_{00}$)</th>
<th>Within-Unit Variance ($\theta^2$)</th>
<th>Between-Unit Variance ($\tau_{00}$)</th>
<th>% Total Variance between units</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Social Undermining</td>
<td>2.17***</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surface Acting</td>
<td>3.22***</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.01%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Percentage of total variance between units was computed with the formula $\tau_{00}/(\theta^2 + \tau_{00})$. $\gamma_{00}$ is the average value of the dependent variable across individuals and units.

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001
Table 6

Summary of Multilevel Effects of Aggregated Psychological Safety on Social Undermining.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fixed Effect</th>
<th>$\gamma$</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>T-Ratio</th>
<th>Approx. df</th>
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<td>.04</td>
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*p < .05, **p<.01
Table 7

Summary of Multilevel Effects of Aggregated Psychological Safety on Surface Acting.

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*p < .05; **p< .01
Table 8

*HLM Interactive Effect of Machiavellianism and Psychological Safety Perceptions to Determine Social Undermining.*

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*p < .05, **p<.01, ***P<.000
Table 9

*Exploratory Regression Analysis of Gender and Machiavellianism Interaction*

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*p < .05, **p < .01, †p < .10*
Figure 1: Psychological Safety as a moderator of Machiavellianism and Social Undermining and Machiavellianism and Surface Acting
**Figure 2:** Relationship Strength Between Machiavellianism and Behaviors under Conditions of High and Low Psychological Safety

Note. Values represent correlations. Correlations for high psychological safety are significant, while correlations for low psychological safety are nonsignificant.
**Figure 3:** The Interaction between Machiavellianism and Perceived Psychological Safety to Determine Social Undermining using individual-level regression.

**Figure 4:** The Interaction between Machiavellianism and Perceived Psychological Safety to Determine Social Undermining using HLM.
Figure 5: The Interaction between Machiavellianism and Gender to Determine Social Undermining
APPENDIX B

Time 1
Independent Variable:
Machiavellianism (Dahling, Whitaker, & Levy, 2009) (1-5 scale)
1. I believe that lying is necessary to maintain a competitive advantage over others.
2. The only good reason to talk to others is to get information that I can use to my benefit.
3. I am willing to be unethical if I believe it will help me succeed.
4. I am willing to sabotage the efforts of other people if they threaten my own goals.
5. I would cheat if there was a low chance of getting caught.
6. I like to give the orders in interpersonal situations.
7. I enjoy having control over other people.
8. I enjoy being able to control the situation.
9. Status is a good sign of success in life.
10. Accumulating wealth is an important goal for me.
11. I want to be rich and powerful someday.
12. People are only motivated by personal gain.
13. I dislike committing to groups because I don't trust others.
14. Team members backstab each other all the time to get ahead.
15. If I show any weakness at work, other people will take advantage of it.
16. Other people are always planning ways to take advantage of the situation at my expense.

Control Variables:
Age
Gender (male=1, female=2)
Neuroticism (Goslin, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003)
1. Anxious, easily upset
2. Calm, emotionally stable (R)

Time 2
Moderators:
Psychological Safety (Edmondson, 1999) (1-5 scale, strongly disagree to strongly agree)
1. If you make a mistake on this team, it is often held against you.
2. Members of this team are able to bring up problems and tough issues.
3. People on this team sometimes reject others for being different.
4. It is safe to take a risk on this team.
5. It is difficult to ask other members of this team for help.
6. No one on this team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.
7. Working with members of this team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilized.

Time 3
Dependent Variables:
Social Undermining (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002) (1-6 scale, never, once or twice, about once a week, several times a week, almost every day, everyday)
How often have you engaged in the following behaviors towards another member of this work unit during the past three months? ....
1. Insulted a coworker?
2. Gave a coworker the silent treatment?
3. Spread rumors about a coworker?
4. Delayed work to make a coworker look bad or slow them down?
5. Belittled a coworker or their ideas?
6. Hurt a coworker’s feelings?
7. Talked badly about a coworker behind their back?
8. Criticized the way a coworker handled things on the job in a way that was not helpful?
9. Did not give a coworker as much help as I had promised?
10. Gave a coworker incorrect or misleading information about the job?
11. Competed with a coworker for status and recognition?
12. Let a coworker know you did not like them or something about them?
13. Did not defend a coworker when people spoke poorly about them?

Surface Acting
(Grandey, 2003) (1-5 scale, never to always)
1. Just pretend to have the emotions I need to display for my job
2. Put on an act in order to deal with customers in an appropriate way.

(Brotheridge & Lee, 2003) (1-5 scale, never to always)
1. Resist expressing my true feelings
2. Pretend to have emotions that I don’t really have
3. Hide my true feelings about a situation.