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**AN EXAMINATION OF IMPLICIT AND EXPLICIT NEED FOR ACHIEVEMENT
AND FEAR OF FAILURE PREDICTING PERCEPTIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL
CONSEQUENCES**

A Thesis in

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by

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Abstract

The interactionist perspective in psychology highlights the importance of studying characteristics of both the person and the situation in order to better understand people's behavior and experiences. However, scholars have debated the extent to which situations are constructed in the minds of the observer versus considered objective realities (Bem & Allen, 1974; Mischel, 1977). This raises questions about how characteristics of the person (i.e., personality) influence the way in which an individual makes sense of the situation. Previous research suggests that personality can shape how people perceive situations (e.g., Sherman et al., 2013), but these studies have been limited to explicit personality – or the conscious cognitions a person has about themselves. The present study aims to integrate implicit personality – or the parts of one's personality of which they are not consciously aware – into our understanding of situational perception. Specifically, this study looks at how a person's implicit and explicit need for achievement and fear of failure predict their perceptions of the consequences of jobs. Results showed that implicit personality (need for achievement and fear of failure) independently predicted perceived consequences. This relationship was moderated by explicit personality (need for achievement). Implications and future directions are discussed.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

When considering how a person will act at any given time, it is often most informative to consider both their personality and the characteristics of the situation that they find themselves in (i.e., take an “interactionist” approach to understanding behavior). The interactionist perspective has gained popularity within organizational research in the past decades, with many researchers taking characteristics of the person, the situation, and the interaction of the two into consideration in their theories and models (Judge & Zapata, 2015; Meyer et al., 2009; Tett & Burnett, 2003). One important consideration in this perspective is the idea that while people’s actions are often shaped by the characteristics of their environments, each person does not necessarily perceive or make sense of their environment in the same way. If one person perceives a situation as threatening and another perceives the same situation as an opportunity, their responses to that situation could vary greatly despite being presented with the same environmental cues.

There is substantial research on the idea that people’s individual differences can shape their perceptions of situations – a process known as situational construal. The research on situational construal is rooted in the question of whether situations exist in an objective reality, or whether they exist in the eye of the beholder. While it is well-known that situational forces can and do shape behavior, it has also been thoroughly acknowledged that these situational forces must be filtered through the perceptions of the actor in order to exert influence (Hogan, 2009; Murray, 1938; Rauthmann, 2012).

Researchers have discussed the relative influence of objective characteristics of the situation compared to the subjective way a person experiences or interprets the situation for quite some time. Indeed, some scholars have even gone as far as to suggest that situations exist

primarily in how they are interpreted by the observer, as opposed to existing as an objective truth (Bem & Allen, 1974; Mischel, 1977). Recent research has directly tested this idea, investigating the extent to which perceptions of situations are due to the objective features of the situation versus individual differences. For example, Sherman and colleagues (2013) found that while participants generally agreed about the characteristics of the situation, they also observed, “reliably distinctive perceptions that are related to personality” (Sherman et al., 2013, pg. 1). They found that a person’s standing on personality traits (specifically big 5 personality traits) was associated with the extent to which they observed the presence of trait-relevant situation content. For example, a person high in agreeableness was more likely to endorse the item “Participant is complimented/praised” as highly characteristic of a given situation. These results lend support to the idea that an individual’s personality shapes their perceptions of situations. In other words, the situation is, at least partially, in the eye of the beholder.

Indeed, there is substantial empirical support across areas of psychology showing that personality can predict perceptions of situations. In adolescents, trait impulsiveness predicts individuals’ perceptions of the riskiness of certain behaviors, which in turn predicts actual risk-taking behavior (Reniers et al., 2016). Within a work context, followers’ personality is associated with perceptions of their leader’s transformational leadership, such that followers who are higher in agreeableness and extraversion perceived their leaders to be more transformational (Felfe & Schyns, 2010). Further, employees with higher core self-evaluations have been shown to report higher levels of job characteristics such as autonomy and task significance (Judge et al., 2000). Of particular interest to the present study, personality has been shown to predict perceptions of situational strength, such that people higher in conscientiousness are more likely to perceive their

work environment as sending strong signals regarding how they should behave (Meyer et al., 2014).

The situational construal literature supports the idea that an individual's personality influences the way in which they perceive and make sense of their environment. Yet in this research, personality has been limited to *explicit* personality, leaving out the implicit side of personality. The present study contributes to this literature by investigating the way in which a person's implicit and explicit personality impact their perceptions of potential jobs. In order to test this question, I will use organizationally relevant personality characteristics (i.e., need for achievement and fear of failure), both of which have been shown to exist in both implicit and explicit forms. Specifically, I will use these individual differences to predict perceptions of a particularly trait-relevant aspect of work situations (i.e., organizational consequences). The remainder of the introduction will review research explaining the connections and differences between explicit and implicit personality in general, followed by specific reviews of the personality constructs of interest in this study: need for achievement and fear of failure. Finally, I will present predictions about how explicit and implicit need for achievement and fear of failure will independently and interactionally influence perceptions of job consequences.

Explicit and Implicit Personality

Human personality consists of both explicit and implicit components, which tend to be theoretically and empirically separate from each other as well as predict different behaviors/outcomes (James & LeBreton, 2012). One's explicit personality is the mental structures and processes that the individual is consciously aware of and able to describe via self-reflection. That is, explicit personality represents one's self-image. Industrial-Organizational Psychologists have most often studied explicit personality (Frost et al., 2007). Yet, there has

been a recent increase in research focusing on the impact of implicit personality on organizationally relevant outcomes. Implicit personality is the part of a person's personality that one is not aware of and is, therefore, not accessible via introspection. Implicit personality has been theorized to predict behavior absent any specific external incentives or pressure (e.g., participation and leadership in community organizations; Spangler, 1992). Theoretically then, explicit and implicit aspects of personality considered together can give researchers a more complete picture of the individual than explicit personality alone.

Although it has repeatedly been shown that implicit and explicit personality are in fact distinct entities (Bing, LeBreton, Davison, Migetz, & James, 2007; Frost et al., 2007; Lang, Zettler, Ewen, & Hülshager, 2012; McClelland, Koestner, & Weinberger, 1989; Spangler, 1992; Thrash & Elliot, 2002; Winter, John, Stewart, Klohnen, & Duncan, 1998), there have been several debates surrounding these two aspects of personality (See Winter et al., 1998 for a review). One debate examined whether traits (explicit) or motives (implicit) were the superior way to define personality (Allport, 1961; Murray, 1938). Another debate focused on the superiority of different measurement approaches. For example, the focal personality variable in this study – need for achievement – was initially proposed as an implicit motive and measured as such using an indirect measure (McClelland et al., 1976). As research on need for achievement expanded, other researchers attempted to test this theory using direct, self-report measures. Researchers found that scores on these self-report measures did not correlate highly with projective measures, and the two measures predicted outcomes differentially (McClelland et al., 1989). These inconsistencies sparked debate about which measurement approach is superior (see James & LeBreton (2012), pg. 5-6 for a discussion of this debate).

As research into this area has continued, however, the evidence has come to support the idea that no single measurement technique is superior, but rather projective and self-report methods are tapping into theoretically distinct constructs (Bing et al., 2007; McClelland et al., 1989; Spangler, 1992). First, the evidence is somewhat mixed regarding how the implicit and explicit personality relate to each other. Some studies find them to be uncorrelated, while others found small to modest correlations (Elliot & Thrash, 2004; McClelland et al., 1989; Spangler, 1992). This suggests that although they might be somehow related, there is not enough overlap to argue that they could be considered the same construct. Second, early research suggested that the two have different behavioral correlates (deCharms et al., 1954). Specifically, implicit personality has been shown to predict behavioral trends over time, such as entrepreneurial activity and managerial success (McClelland, 1965; McClelland & Boyatzis, 1982). In contrast, explicit personality has been linked more closely to behavior and choices in response to an immediate task (McClelland et al., 1989). In sum, research suggests that rather than being better or worse versions of the same construct, or artifacts of better or worse measurement approaches, implicit and explicit personality are in fact distinct constructs with unique abilities to predict outcomes such as situational perception.

Implicit and explicit need for achievement. The need for achievement (nAch) is defined as “a concern with doing things better” (Koestner, Weinberger, & McClelland, 1991, pg. 58). People who are high in nAch actively pursue challenging activities, are eager for feedback, and prefer to work in a self-determined manner (Koestner, Weinberger, & McClelland, 1991). Implicit nAch manifests at a deep motivational level. When faced with a decision to approach or avoid a challenging task, individuals high in implicit nAch tend to approach (rather than avoid) it (James & LeBreton, 2012). These individuals prefer challenging goals that are moderately

difficult, and the attainment of these goals is associated with positive emotions such as pride (Atkinson, 1957; McClelland, 1985). These individuals willingly devote large amounts of time and energy to master a difficult task in order to gain the satisfaction that comes with doing so.

Whereas implicit nAch is determined by the underlying motivations that drive people to approach challenging situations, one's explicit nAch is determined by their cognitions about their own desire to achieve. A person high in explicit nAch would describe themselves as someone who enjoys doing things that challenge them and strives to succeed (Bing et al., 2007). Although implicit and explicit nAch sound similar in description (e.g., a desire to succeed and tendency to take on challenging tasks are focal points in both), the distinction between them is well established; namely, implicit nAch is defined by one's underlying motivational tendencies, whereas explicit nAch is defined by one's self-image. As with other dimensions of implicit and explicit personality, they are not strongly correlated with each other and likely work in concert to predict relevant outcomes (Bing et al., 2007; McClelland et al., 1989; Spangler, 1992).

In order to fully understand the interplay between implicit and explicit nAch, it can be helpful to consider how these two aspects of one's personality can combine. For example, individuals who are congruent high nAch (i.e. people who are high in both implicit and explicit nAch) will approach challenging and achievement-oriented tasks, aspire to high performance, and be driven to achieve at work (Bing et al., 2007). Because their implicit and explicit personalities match, they should not experience any dissonance between their self-image and their deeper motivations. However, individuals who are high in explicit nAch, but low in implicit nAch will see themselves as high achievers but will not have the underlying achievement motive to match their self-image. These individuals might find themselves drawn to achievement-oriented tasks or feel pressure to approach such tasks, but experience anxiety when actually

engaging in such tasks. This disconnect has the potential to lead to feelings of dissonance between what they think they want and what their underlying motivation is actually pulling them toward.

Implicit and explicit fear of failure. Fear of failure (FF) is a related construct that was developed alongside nAch. FF is characterized by uneasiness or anxiety about attempting a difficult task for fear of the shame associated with failing (Atkinson, 1957; Elliot & Thrash, 2004). Whereas people who are high in nAch are motivated to strive for success, people high in FF are predisposed to act in ways that will avoid failure (Atkinson, 1957). People high in FF try to protect themselves from the shame associated with failure by either withdrawing from the situation or by pushing hard to succeed (Covington, 1992; Elliot & Church, 2003). Research has demonstrated that FF is negatively associated with both performance and well-being (Birney et al., 1969; Elliot & Sheldon, 1997). Like nAch, FF has been conceptualized and studied at both the implicit and explicit levels.

At the implicit level, FF manifests as, “a tendency to respond to achievement-oriented tasks with apprehension about failing and being deemed incompetent” (James & LeBreton, 2012, pg. 41). People high in implicit FF are motivated to avoid the pain associated with failing, which can manifest in multiple ways. A person high in implicit FF might aim to avoid failure by avoiding challenging achievement-oriented tasks altogether. Another approach that high implicit FF individuals take is to engage in self-handicapping behaviors (James & LeBreton, 2012). One example of this would be a student who does not adequately prepare for a test as a way to preemptively justify poor performance. Using this reasoning, if this person studied and performed poorly, it would show that they are a failure. However, if they performed poorly because they did not study, then they can protect their self-worth by reasoning that they only got a bad grade

because they did not study, not because they themselves are a failure. Both of these implicit FF tactics – avoiding challenging tasks and self-handicapping – can occur without conscious awareness that one is behaving this way out of a fear of failure.

At the explicit level, FF is characterized by how one describes their approach to achievement-related tasks and their anxiety associated with such tasks. A person who is high in explicit FF will describe themselves as someone who would rather do an easy job than a challenging one and tries to cover up or gloss over their failures (Bing et al., 2007; Elliot & Sheldon, 1997). As with nAch, individuals have different profiles of implicit and explicit FF. A person who is high in both implicit and explicit fear of failure (congruent FF) can be expected to avoid achievement related tasks and recognize that they are doing so out of a fear of failing (Bing et al., 2007). However, a person who is high in implicit FF but low in explicit FF might find themselves selecting into challenging achievement-related situations because they lack the explicit FF that makes them consciously avoid these situations. Yet, once they are actually faced with the challenging task, they might find themselves paralyzed by fear or engaging in self-handicapping behaviors due to their high levels of implicit FF.

The intersection of need for achievement and fear of failure. Because of their relevance to work-related outcomes, and the fact that they both exist at the implicit and explicit level, nAch and FF are apt constructs to test the integration of implicit and explicit personality into our understanding of how personality predicts job perceptions. Before considering how these aspects of personality might impact one's experience at work, it is important to consider the relationship between nAch and FF, as their relationship is quite different at the implicit and explicit levels. At the implicit level, nAch and FF are considered opposite ends of the same motive spectrum. They represent separate motivational tendencies invoked in response to

achievement-related stimuli: approach orientation (nAch) and avoidance orientation (FF; Atkinson, 1957). A person will respond to a task or job with one of the two motivations: either they will engage in the task (or will not) out of an implicit bias toward approaching success, or out of an implicit bias toward avoiding failure (Atkinson, 1957; James & LeBreton, 2012). The measurement of implicit nAch and FF reflects this dichotomy, with the two being measured as opposite ends of the same spectrum (James & LeBreton, 2012)

At the explicit level, however, the two are not opposite ends of the same spectrum. Rather, they are two separate constructs. Explicit personality is characterized by how people *see themselves*. It is entirely plausible that a person could describe themselves as an intellectually curious person (characteristic of nAch), while also describing themselves as someone who feels concerned they will make a mistake while working on an important task (characteristic of FF) (Heggestad & Kanfer, 2000). Indeed, explicit measures of FF and nAch are largely statistically independent, with studies showing a weak negative correlation of about $r = -.10$ (Heggestad & Kanfer, 2000; Thrash & Elliot, 2002). Therefore, it is important to make the distinction that nAch and FF are conceptualized as opposite ends of the same spectrum at the implicit level, but they are distinct and largely independent of each other at the explicit level.

Organizational Consequences

The present study focuses on organizational consequences as the environmental variable of interest because of its relevance to nAch and FF. Organizational consequences are defined as the extent to which a person's actions cause important positive or negative outcomes for themselves or others (Meyer et al., 2010). This construct has been defined and operationalized within the situational strength literature, and is conceptually similar to task significance (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Meyer et al., 2010, 2014). Some examples of high consequences

occupations are police officer and surgeon. If people in these careers make a mistake, it could result in harm to others. Further, one misstep could end their career and incite lawsuits. At the same time, these jobs can also come with high pay and/or gratitude and praise from the people they have helped. Some low consequences jobs include telemarketers and tour guides, as behaviors on these jobs are not typically associated with serious repercussions or rewards (Meyer et al., 2009). This characteristic is particularly relevant for need for achievement and fear of failure because the consequences of a job can determine the extent to which an individual has the opportunity to both accomplish meaningful things at work or fail at tasks that have important implications. The present study aims to explore the ways in which individuals' perceptions of organizational consequences vary as a function of their implicit and explicit nAch and FF.

Hypothesis Development

As described above, it is well-established that personality can predict how a person perceives a situation. Individuals with a high explicit nAch hold a self-image characterized by a desire to take on challenging tasks and strive to succeed. These individuals will consequently seek out opportunities that allow them to fulfill this need. When confronted with a new situation, they will be more likely to see it through this lens of seeking out opportunity for need fulfillment. When evaluating a new situation for its consequences, individuals with higher explicit nAch will be more attuned to the achievement-focused aspects of the job, and thus more likely to see the job as consequential.

Hypothesis 1: Higher explicit need for achievement will be associated with higher perceived consequences.

Similarly, individuals with higher explicit FF are also likely to be highly attuned to the consequences of a job, but for a different reason. Individuals with higher explicit FF are concerned with the possibility of failure and humiliation in achievement-oriented situations.

These individuals are likely to see consequences in a job as opportunities for failure – and the shame and embarrassment associated with failure – rather than seeing these as opportunities to succeed and gain recognition at work. This fear will cause individuals higher in explicit FF to be highly attuned to consequences from a failure-avoidance perspective.

Hypothesis 2: Higher explicit fear of failure will be associated with higher perceived consequences.

Although there is not as much extant research investigating the way on which implicit personality influences perceptions, it is likely that implicit personality will impact people's perceptions of consequences. Implicit personality shapes the way people make sense of the world at a deep, subconscious level. Specifically, implicit nAch-FF is particularly relevant for situations related to performance and improving skills. Individuals who tend to reason from an achievement motive perspective (higher implicit nAch-FF) are more likely to see challenges as exciting opportunities to demonstrate skills and contribute to the organization (Brunstein & Heckhausen, 2008; McClelland, 1985). A person whose implicit personality tends toward FF will see those same challenges not as an opportunity, but rather as a liability whereby they might fail and be seen as incompetent. These different motivational perspectives, which define implicit nAch-FF, shape the way that people make sense of the world. Therefore, it is likely that this will extend to the way they perceive environmental cues. Specifically, a strong tendency to see the world through either a nAch or FF lens will lead a person to be attuned to the possible consequences of their actions, and thus perceive higher consequences. In other words, as one's implicit personality is more extreme in the direction of either nAch or FF, they will perceive higher consequences.

Hypothesis 3: Implicit need for achievement-fear of failure will have a curvilinear relationship with perceived consequences such that as people's implicit motives become

more extreme (in either the need for achievement or fear of failure direction), perceived consequences increase.

When considering the interaction of implicit and explicit personality, it is useful to first consider the predicted relationship from a theoretical standpoint. Bing and colleagues (2007) presented a useful personality typology that integrates implicit and explicit nAch and FF (see Table 1). Using the integrative model of FF and nAch, congruent “average Joes/Janes” should perceive the lowest level of consequences. These individuals’ middle of the road implicit

Table 1

Conditions of Congruence between Implicit and Explicit Need for Achievement and Fear of Failure

		Implicit	
		Fear of failure	Need for achievement
Explicit	Need for achievement	<p>Achievement Motivation Pretenders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceive themselves as high achievers, but are disposed to reason based on fear of failure Experience conscious pressure to approach achievement-oriented tasks, but actually approach those tasks on which they can deflect responsibility 	<p>Congruent Achievement Motivation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approach demanding and achievement-oriented tasks Ambitious in the pursuit of person career goals
	Fear of failure	<p>Congruent Fear of Failure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid achievement-oriented tasks and rationalize that avoidance Often fearful, anxious, or nervous when placed in challenging situations in which levels of effort and performance are required for success 	<p>Congruent Average Joe/Jane</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceive selves as possessing reasonable achievement motives for which they have moderate implicit cognitions Tendency to balance work with family and other life pursuits Less behaviorally reactive when under situations that demand competency <p>Hesitant Achievement Motivation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tend to aspire to high performance levels Industrious and driven to achieve at work

Note. This table was adapted from a table displayed in Bing et al., 2007.

motivation will not predispose them to reason from a strong achievement or fear of failure

motivation. In this regard, they represent the middle of the U-shaped effect predicted in

Hypothesis 3. Additionally, these individuals do not have a strong influence of explicit nAch or

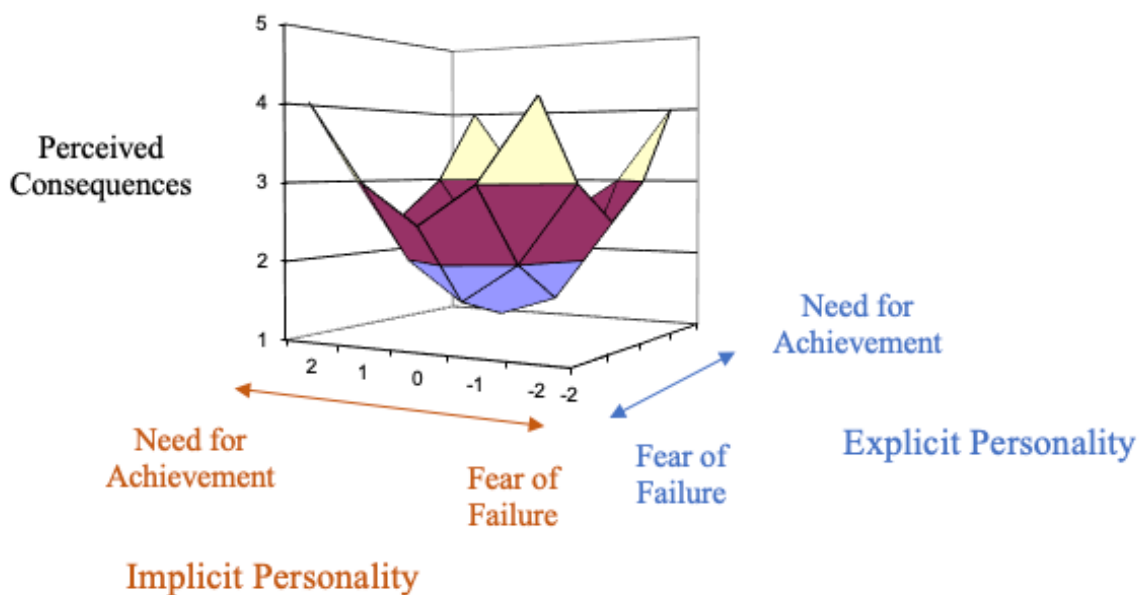
FF and represent the low to mid end of the effects predicted in hypotheses 1 and 2. As

individuals' personalities move to the more extreme ends, they are more likely to perceive higher consequences. For example, a congruent achievement motivation individual is likely to perceive high consequences because both their implicit and explicit personalities are cueing them to pick up on the aspects of the job that are relevant to consequences.

The result of this person x situation perceptual model is a theoretical prediction resembling a tulip shape, whereby the highest perceptions of consequences will occur at the corners, and perceptions of consequences will decrease as individuals' implicit and explicit personalities become more consistent with the average Joe/Jane profile. For a visual representation of this prediction, see Figure 1.

Figure 1

Theoretical prediction of the explicit x implicit interaction effect



Because explicit nAch and FF are not measured along the same continuum, it is impossible to directly test this theoretical prediction. In practice, this test can be split into two tests, one comparing explicit nAch with implicit nAch-FF and one comparing explicit FF and

implicit nAch-FF. For both of these tests, the U-shape of the implicit effect should remain, with perceived consequences increasing as explicit personality (both nAch and FF) increases. A visual representation of these predicted results is shown in Figure 2.

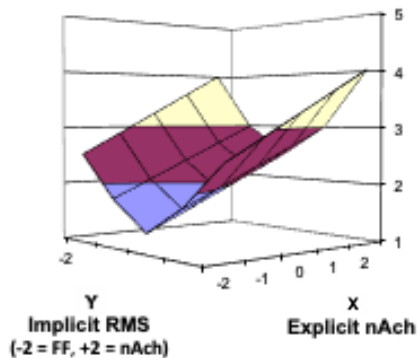
Hypothesis 4: Explicit need for achievement and implicit nAch-FF will interact such that the U-shape effect remains for implicit personality, and perceived consequences increase as explicit need for achievement increases.

Hypothesis 5: Explicit fear of failure and implicit nAch-FF will interact such that the U-shape effect remains for implicit personality, and perceived consequences increase as explicit need for achievement increases.

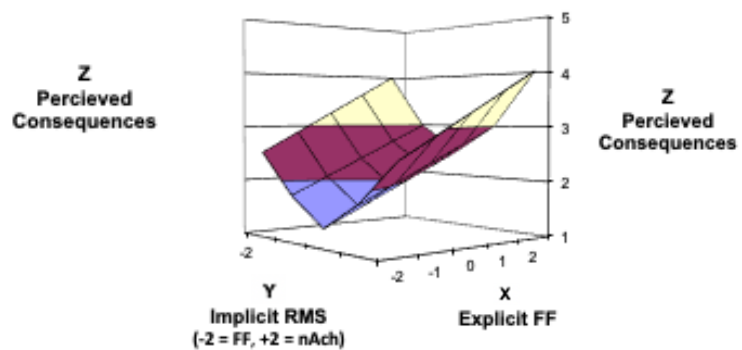
Figure 2

Predicted results for hypotheses 4 and 5

Hypothesis 4:



Hypothesis 5:



Chapter 2

Method

Participants and Procedure

Participants were undergraduate student volunteers from a large university in the Northeastern United States. The initial sample of 331 participants was narrowed down to a final sample of 238 (81% Female). See Table 2 for the reasons behind data exclusion. Age ranged from 18 to 28 ($M = 18.61$, $SD = 1.21$). Participants were 11% Asian, 4% Black or African American, 3% Hispanic or Latinx, less than 1% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 73% White, and 9% other or multiple ethnicities. Participants' work experience ranged from 0-7 years ($M = 2.22$, $SD = 1.71$). Participants completed this study in exchange for course credit.

Table 2

Reasons for exclusion for study and numbers of excluded participants

Exclusion Reason	# Excluded
1. Participants selected “no, definitely do not use my data” in response to the question “Based on the effort and attention you gave this study, should we use your data in our research?”	10
2. If there were multiple responses from the same IP address, only one was retained. The retained response was the most complete response. If multiple complete responses were provided, the one with the earliest timestamp was retained	15
3. Participants missed more than 4 attention check items out of a possible 6	18
4. The survey was completed in less than 20 minutes, which is indicative of random responding	7
5. Participants endorsed more than 2 illogical answers in the CRT-RMS. The CRT is based on participants selecting answers to questions posed as a reasoning test. These questions include illogical options as distractor items. When a participant selects an illogical response, this indicates they are either not paying attention or misunderstanding the questions	41
6. Participants did not respond to the outcome variable (perceived consequences)	2

Note. All 6 attention check items were embedded across the scales and requested that the participant select a specific response option. For example, “Please select ‘Neither agree nor disagree.’”

Participants completed survey measures of explicit nAch and FF and a conditional reasoning test measuring implicit nAch-FF. Participants were then presented with job titles and descriptions and rated their perceptions of the consequences of each job. The full set of job titles and descriptions is provided in Appendix A, and the process of selecting these jobs is described in the following section.

Job Description Pilot Study

The specific jobs used as stimuli in this study were selected via a multi-step process. The goal of this process was to identify sets of jobs which varied in their level of consequences but were similar to each other across other job characteristics. From a theoretical standpoint, personality-based differences in perception are most likely to occur in weak situations (i.e., when there are fewer contextual cues about how one should behave). For this reason, only the low consequence jobs were used in the analyses of this study. In the interest of comprehensiveness and clarity, the selection process for all sets of jobs is described here.

To identify an initial list of job pairings, I utilized data acquired through the occupational information network (O*NET; <https://www.onetonline.org/>). O*Net is a database containing data describing the tasks involved in nearly 1000 occupations, as well as aspects of the work context. The data supplied by O*NET are derived from ratings provided by subject matter experts (Hubbard et al., 2000; Peterson et al., 2001). In this pilot study, I utilized scores on the “Consequence of Error” aspect of the work context. The data provided for these scores represents the percentage of subject matter experts who rated the consequences of error as

“extremely serious.” Scores on consequence of error across all jobs ranged from 8 to 98, with a mean of 51.20 (SD = 18.11).

The 968 jobs on O*Net at the time of the study were ranked according to their rating on their Consequence of Error score, and these jobs were divided into thirds representing the highest, middle, and lowest consequence jobs (high-medium cutoff = 59, medium-low cutoff = 42). I then identified jobs from each of these categories which shared similar work characteristics and tasks. For example, Audio and Video Equipment Technicians were used as an example of a “low” (i.e., “weak”) job, so the next step was to find examples of similar jobs that conceptually overlapped with it but varied substantially on consequences. In this case, Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians served as the “high consequences,” stimulus and Automotive Engineering Technicians served as the “medium consequences” stimulus. Thus, the six sets of jobs for this study were chosen to maximize task similarity across the pairings and differentiation of consequence of error scores. See Table 3 for the job titles and consequence of error scores for six best job sets.¹

Table 3

*Job titles and Consequence of Error scores from O*Net for six best job sets*

Job Set 1	<i>Nuclear Power Reactor Operators</i>	<i>Food Cooking Machine Operators and Tenders</i>	<i>Office Machine Operators, Except Computer</i>
	90	54	24
Job Set 2	<i>First-Line Supervisors of Correctional Officers</i>	<i>First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers</i>	<i>First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers</i>
	82	51	17
Job Set 3	<i>Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians</i>	<i>Automotive Engineering Technicians</i>	<i>Audio and Video Equipment Technicians</i>
	86	58	31

¹ Due to possible influences of the COVID-19 pandemic, jobs that were likely to be seen as having greater consequences due to the pandemic were excluded. For example, healthcare and postal service jobs were excluded.

Job Set 4	<i>Chemical Technicians</i>	<i>Cooks, Institution and Cafeteria</i>	<i>Baristas</i>
	75	56	15
Job Set 5	<i>Psychiatrist</i>	<i>Mental Health Counselors</i>	<i>School Psychologists</i>
	73	57	30
Job Set 6	<i>Elevator Installers and Repairers</i>	<i>Manufactured Building and Mobile Home Installers</i>	<i>Electronic Home Entertainment Equipment Installers and Repairers</i>
	85	55	41

Note. The bolded jobs were retained for use in the study.

After selecting the six sets of jobs, a pilot study was run in order to determine if the O*Net ratings of consequences would replicate in a layperson sample and to determine the best stimuli for this study. Participants in the pilot study were 40 adults recruited through Prolific Academic (<https://app.prolific.co>). 60% of participants were female, with an average age of 31.02 (SD = 10.62) and average work experience of 10.88 years (SD = 9.16). In this study participants were presented with brief descriptions of each of the selected jobs. These job descriptions consisted of the job title and the top five tasks as listed on O*Net (see Appendix A for the exact descriptions shown to participants). Participants then rated the consequences of these jobs using the SSW consequences subscale as described in the measures section.

Based on the results of this pilot, four job pairings with the greatest differentiation between high, medium, and low consequences were chosen for use in the study (see Table 4 and Figure 3). Only four of the job sets were used because time limitations did not allow for the use of all 6 sets of jobs, and the four selected sets effectively captured a variety of professions. In order to further maximize the number of job pairings presented while limiting participant burden, the final study used two full sets of high, medium, and low consequence jobs and two sets that only included high and low consequence jobs. The two job sets which were presented in full were chosen because they displayed the greatest variability in consequences ratings (i.e., the

highest standard deviations for the low consequence jobs), making them the most ideal to test the hypotheses proposed in this study. The result of this pilot study was 10 jobs descriptions (2 sets of high-medium-low jobs and 2 sets of high-low jobs) which have been reliably shown to differ in the extent of their consequences.

Table 4

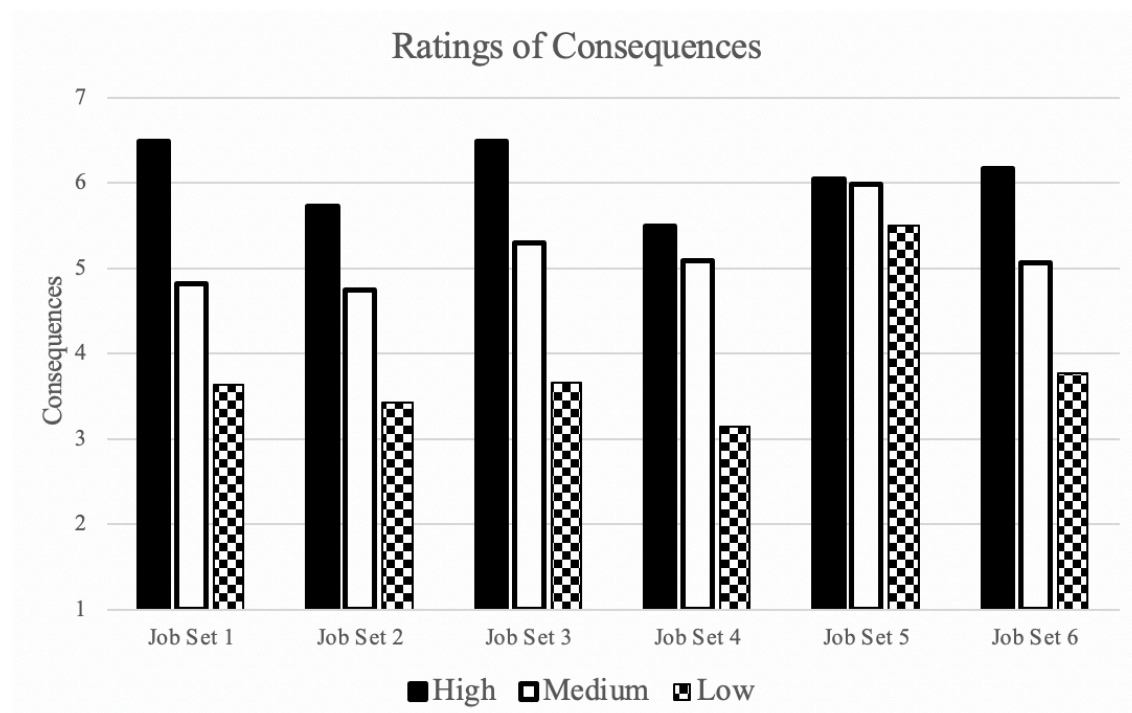
Mean and SD of consequence ratings in the pilot study

	High	Med	Low
Job Set 1	6.49 (0.55)	4.82 (1.19)	3.63 (1.29)
Job Set 2	5.73 (0.89)	4.74 (1.18)	3.43 (1.17)
Job Set 3	6.49 (0.60)	5.30 (1.12)	3.66 (1.48)
Job Set 4	5.49 (0.96)	5.08 (1.47)	3.14 (1.43)
Job Set 5	6.05 (1.05)	5.98 (0.83)	5.50 (1.05)
Job Set 6	6.17 (0.91)	5.07 (1.09)	3.78 (1.33)

Note. Bolded scores represent the scores for the jobs retained for use in the study

Figure 3

Results of the pilot study showing participant ratings of consequences across the six job sets



Measures

Explicit need for achievement. Explicit nAch was measured using the 16-item personal mastery dimension of the Motivational Trait Questionnaire ($\alpha = .91$; Heggstad & Kanfer, 2000). Participants used a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Very untrue of me*) to 6 (*Very true of me*) to rate the extent to which statements describe them (e.g., “I set high standards for myself and work toward achieving them”).

Explicit fear of failure. Explicit FF was measured using the 19-item motivation anxiety dimension of the Motivational Trait Questionnaire ($\alpha = .92$; Heggstad & Kanfer, 2000). Participants used a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Very untrue of me*) to 6 (*Very true of me*) to rate the extent to which statements describe them (e.g., “Before beginning an important task, I think of the consequences of failing.”).

Implicit need for achievement and fear of failure. Implicit nAch-FF was assessed using the conditional reasoning test for relative motive strength (CRT-RMS; James, 1998; James & LeBreton, 2012). The CRT-RMS assesses the strength of an individual’s implicit achievement motivation relative to their motivation to avoid failure using 15 inductive reasoning questions. Participants’ scores were generated using the procedure described by James (1998), which results in scores with a possible range of -15 to +15. Higher scores indicate a tendency towards achievement motivation and lower scores indicate a tendency towards fear of failure. Reliability for this measure was computed using r_{xx} following the protocols laid out by LeBreton and colleagues (2020), $r_{xx} = .72$.

Organizational consequences. Participants rated the organizational consequences in each job using the 7-item consequences subscale from the Situational Strength at Work (SSW) scale ($\alpha = .95$; Meyer et al., 2014). Participants used a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1

(*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) to rate the extent to which they agree with statements describing organizational consequences (e.g., “On this job, important outcomes are influenced by an employee’s actions”). Participants used this scale to rate each of four jobs, and their overall perceived consequences score is the average of their ratings across the four jobs.

Chapter 3

Results

Table 5 includes the means, standard deviations, and correlations among variables. Of note, implicit RMS was not highly correlated with explicit nAch ($r = .08$) or explicit FF ($r = -.02$), consistent with the expectation that explicit and implicit personality are independent of each other. Further, explicit nAch and explicit FF were similarly unrelated ($r = -.05$), supporting the assertion that they represent distinct constructs (as opposed to opposite ends of the same spectrum). Post-hoc power analyses for the models tested in hypotheses 4 and 5 indicated the final sample size of 238 was sufficient to detect effects (power $> .99$ for both models).

Table 5

Descriptive statistics, correlations, and reliability

Variable Names	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Explicit Need for Achievement	4.48	0.68	(.91)			
2. Explicit Fear of Failure	4.26	0.82	-.05	(.92)		
3. Implicit RMS	4.48	3.85	.08	-.02	(.72)	
4. Perceived Consequences	3.50	1.04	.03	.08	-.27**	(.95)

Note. **Correlation is significant at $<.01$. Measures of internal consistency reliability are presented along the diagonal: r_{xx} for the Implicit RMS (LeBreton et al., 2020), α for all other scales.

Hypothesis 1 stated that explicit nAch would be linearly associated with perceived consequences such that individuals higher in explicit nAch perceive higher consequences in jobs. No such effect was found ($b = 0.04$, $se = 0.10$, $p = .66$, thus hypothesis 1 was not supported. Hypothesis 2 stated that explicit FF would be linearly associated with perceived consequences such that individuals higher in explicit FF perceive higher consequences in jobs. No such effect was found ($b = 0.10$, $se = 0.08$, $p = .24$), thus hypothesis 2 was not supported.

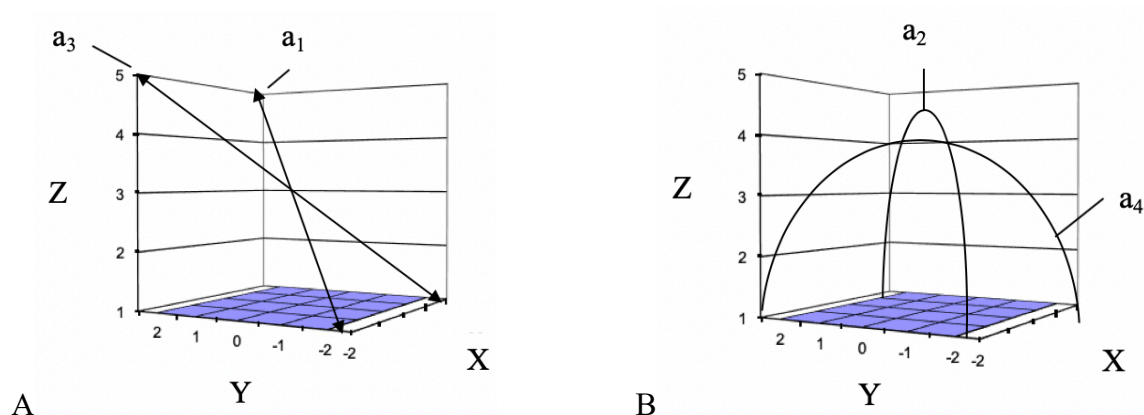
Hypothesis 3 stated that implicit nAch-FF would be curvilinearly associated with perceived consequences such that as an individual's implicit personality becomes more extreme in the direction of FF or nAch, they will perceive higher consequences in jobs. No curvilinear effect was found ($b = 1.66.$, $se = 1.00$, $p = .10$), thus hypothesis 3 was not supported. However, a significant negative linear effect was found in the same model ($b = -4.38.$, $se = 1.00$, $p < .001$). To further investigate this effect, an exploratory linear regression was run including only the linear effect of implicit nAch-FF, and the linear effect of implicit nAch-FF on perceived consequences remained significant ($b = -0.07$, $se = 0.02$, $p < .001$). Thus, as a person's implicit personality tends towards achievement motivation (as opposed to fear of failure), they will tend to perceive lower consequences.

Analytic Approach for Hypotheses 4 and 5

In order to test the proposed curvilinear effects in Hypotheses 4 and 5, polynomial regression with response surface analysis was used (Bing et al., 2007; Edwards, 1993). This approach allows for the testing of conditions of congruence and incongruence between the individuals' implicit and explicit personalities. Using this approach, I tested each predictor (e.g., explicit and implicit nAch), as well as their cross-product and the squared values of each predictor using the following equation:

$$Z = b_0 + b_1X + b_2Y + b_3X^2 + b_4XY + b_5Y^2 + e$$

All variables included in the polynomial regression were standardized, and the standardized variables were used to create the cross-product and squared values. The results of the polynomial regression analysis can be interpreted using four response surface parameters (see Figure 4). The a_1 parameter tests the slope of the line along which a person's score on X is equal

Figure 4*Parameters in Response Surface Analysis*

Note. Panel A indicates the linear parameters a_1 and a_3 . Panel B indicates the curvilinear parameters a_2 and a_4 .

to their score on Y. For example, in hypothesis 4, I predict an interaction between explicit and implicit nAch. In this example, a_1 represents the line of congruence where a person's implicit and explicit personality are congruent (e.g., high implicit nAch and high explicit nAch would fall along this line). The a_2 parameter tests the curvature of this line.

The a_3 parameter tests the slope of the line along which a person's score on X is the inverse of their score on Y. In the test of hypothesis 4, this line represents incongruence. For example, people with high implicit nAch and low explicit nAch would fall along this line. The a_4 parameter tests the curvature of this line.

Interaction Effects

Hypotheses 4 predicted explicit nAch and implicit nAch-FF will interact such that the U-shape effect remains for implicit personality, and perceived consequences increase as explicit personality increases. Given this prediction, we would expect all of the a_1 - a_4 parameters to be significant and positive. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 6. The full model was significant, $R^2 = .15$, $p < .001$. Notably, the $a_1(-)$, $a_2(-)$, and $a_3(+)$ parameters were significant.

While this pattern of results is not consistent with the predictions in hypothesis 4, these results suggest an interaction between implicit need for achievement and implicit nAch-FF. As seen in figure 5, for those with low explicit need for achievement, there is no effect of implicit nAch-FF on perceived consequences. However, as explicit need for achievement increases, the negative relationship between implicit RMS and perceived consequences emerges. In other words, implicit RMS is associated with an increase in perceived consequences only to the extent that an individual has higher explicit need for achievement.

Hypothesis 5 predicted explicit personality FF and implicit nAch-FF will interact such that the U-shape effect remains for implicit personality, and perceived consequences increase as explicit personality increases. As with hypothesis 4, this prediction suggests we would expect all of the a_1 - a_4 parameters to be significant and positive. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 7. The full model was significant, $R^2 = .13$, $p < .001$. Notably, the $a_1(-)$ and $a_3(+)$ parameters were significant, suggesting there were linear, but not curvilinear effects. These

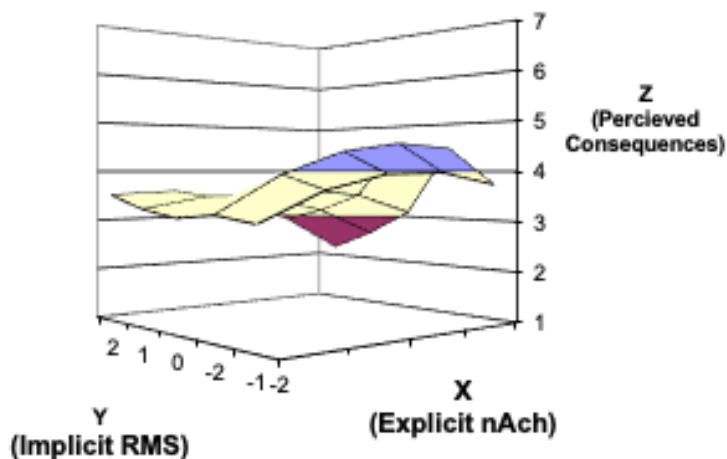
Table 6

Parameters from RSA analyses testing hypothesis 4

Variable	Perceived Consequences		
	<i>b</i>	se	<i>p</i>
Constant	3.64	0.09	<.001
Explicit Need for Achievement	-0.01	0.07	.890
Implicit RMS	-0.25	0.07	<.001
Explicit need for Achievement squared	-0.13	0.05	.005
Explicit need for achievement x implicit RMS	-0.16	0.08	.032
Implicit RMS squared	0.06	0.06	.146
<i>Surface tests</i>			
a_1	-0.26	0.10	.009
a_2	-0.23	0.10	.026
a_3	0.24	0.10	.016
a_4	0.09	0.12	.456

Figure 5

Surface Area Plot of the Results of the Test of Hypothesis 4



effects are equivalent to the linear negative main effect of implicit nAch-FF on perceived consequences, as can be seen in Figure 6. Thus, hypothesis 5 was not supported.

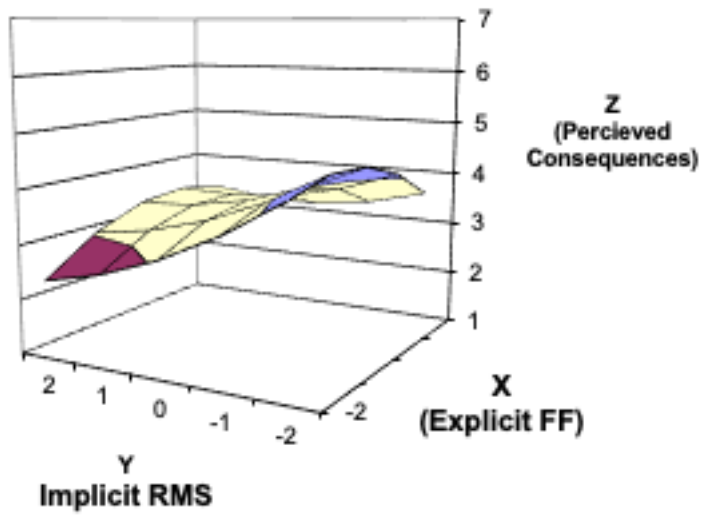
Table 7

Parameters from RSA analyses testing hypothesis 5

Variable	Perceived Consequences		
	<i>b</i>	se	<i>p</i>
Constant	3.63	0.09	<.001
Explicit fear of failure	0.02	0.07	.783
Implicit RMS	-0.26	0.07	<.001
Explicit fear of failure squared	-0.13	0.05	.009
Explicit fear of failure x implicit RMS	0.1	0.07	.182
Implicit RMS squared	0.07	0.04	.101
<i>Surface tests</i>			
<i>a</i> ₁	-0.24	0.10	.016
<i>a</i> ₂	0.04	0.11	.726
<i>a</i> ₃	0.28	0.10	.005
<i>a</i> ₄	-0.16	0.09	.093

Figure 6

Surface Area Plot of the Results of the Test of Hypothesis 5



Chapter 4

Discussion

The present study aimed to investigate whether individuals' personalities – implicit and explicit personality independently, as well as the interaction of the two – predict their perceptions of environmental characteristics. Specifically, I found that neither a person's standing on explicit nAch nor FF was related to their perceptions of consequences. However, I did find a significant negative relationship between implicit nAch-FF and perceived consequences such that as a person tends to reason more from an achievement motivation perspective as opposed to a FF perspective (i.e., higher scores on the CRT-RMS), they are more likely to perceive lower consequences. The results are more complex when taking both implicit and explicit personality into account. I found an interaction between implicit nAch-FF and explicit nAch, such that the negative effect of implicit nAch-FF decreases as an individual's explicit nAch decreases. For fear of failure, however, there was no significant interaction, and only the negative main effect of implicit nAch-FF was observed.

These results represent a promising step towards understanding the way in which people's perceptions of situations vary according to their individual differences. By taking an interactionist perspective, I recognize that people's behavior often varies as a function of the interplay of the situation the person finds themselves in, as well as their individual traits. Yet, the present study highlights that a person's *perception of the situation* also varies as a function of their individual traits. This highlights the complexity involved in using person-situation interactions of predict outcomes such as behavior and attitudes. The situation is indeed, partially in the eye of the beholder, and this must be taken into account if we want to more fully understand the effect of situations.

Additionally, these results highlight the importance of taking implicit personality and its interaction with explicit personality into account in our considerations of personality and its effect on perceptions. Previous tests of construal effects have focused primarily on explicit personality. However, the results of this study demonstrate that in the case of nAch and FF, implicit personality can have substantial impacts on situational perception, whereas explicit personality does not have a direct influence. Further, the results of the interactive test for nAch show the importance of considering the interplay of both implicit and explicit personality in order to gain a complete understanding of the forces at work.

Limitations and future directions

The study presented here was designed intentionally to be a focused test of two specific personality traits (nAch and FF) and their effect on perceptions of a particularly trait-relevant characteristic of the work environment (organizational consequences). This approach allows for a precise test of the broader idea that implicit and explicit personality have an important influence on perceptions. The nature of this approach has provided a narrow test of this concept, which considerably limits the generalizability of these results. While these results are promising and suggest there is value in exploring the role of implicit and explicit personality in influencing perceptions, it is not currently possible to tell how these effects might expand to other personality dimensions, nor how far the effects extend into perceptions of other organizational characteristics that are less directly relevant to the traits used in this study.

Future research should expand upon the work presented here to explore whether the effects observed in this study extend to other personality traits or perceptions of other job characteristics. For example, is it necessary to look only at trait-relevant organizational characteristics, or are the effects of implicit nAch-FF wide reaching? Perhaps the effects

presented here were only observable because implicit nAch-FF is directly relevant to features of this personality trait. However, it is also possible that a person's standing on implicit nAch-FF will color the way they see many aspects of their job, such as how challenging a job is or the extent of the autonomy one has in a job. Additionally, future work can apply the premise of this project to investigate how other personality traits and individual differences affect perceptions of job characteristics relevant to those traits. For example, the implicit need for affiliation and its explicit counterpart, extraversion, might influence perceptions of the emotional display requirements of service jobs.

Finally, the present study highlights the importance of personality on perceptions of job characteristics but does not directly test how these perceptions influence downstream behavior. While these results are interesting in their own right from a basic science perspective, they also have the potential to add practical value by informing our understanding of the way person-environment fit plays out through the course of a person's career. Specifically, an interesting future direction would be exploring the way that implicit and explicit nAch and FF influence attraction to and satisfaction within jobs of varying consequences.

The present research has established that those with higher explicit nAch and higher implicit FF are likely to perceive higher consequences in a job, but this does not directly tell us anything about what that means for that person's experience in the workforce. Are those individuals more likely to be attracted to this job because of the high consequences they perceive? Perhaps these individuals will seek out high consequences jobs in an attempt to fulfill their self-image of being a person with high need for achievement. Yet, once they are on this job, perhaps their implicit fear or failure will paralyze them in a role with high consequences. From this perspective, these individuals having an inflated perception of consequences could be a good

thing in that their fear of failure leads them to perceive a low consequences job to have high consequences, which will in turn attract them to this role. Then once they are on the job, the fact that this role is actually has relatively lower consequences will make it a good fit for their high implicit FF personality. At this point, these ideas are purely speculative, but they demonstrate the many interesting streams of research that could build upon the basic perceptual findings presented in this study.

Practical implications

The present study represents a foundation which can have important implications for practice within organizations. Specifically, these findings could have important implications for understanding career trajectories and job choice. From the interactionist perspective, we often think about organizational attraction as a function of fit (e.g., a person seeks out jobs that are consistent with their individual needs and preferences). However, this assumes that people are able to accurately perceive the features of jobs, and that these perceptions are stable and consistent across individuals. As the results of this study show, this is not always the case. Thus, having a better understanding of how potential employees perceive their environments as a function of their personality can be useful in informing how employers conceive of P-E fit in their recruitment strategies.

Building on this idea, organizations should consider the strength of the signals they are sending both in the recruitment process and throughout an employee's time at the organization. The findings of this study highlight how different types of people pick up on situational cues differently. If an organization is trying to send cues about the important consequences of workers' behaviors, different people might perceive those cues in different ways. Some employees might already be keenly aware of the consequences of their work, while other might

require very clear explicit signals to get the message. These perceptual differences suggest that communication and signaling from an organization might not have a one-size-fits-all effect on workers' perceptions of job-related consequences. Thus, there is value in gaining a better understanding of the role of implicit and explicit personality in perceptions of the environment to inform both theory and practice.

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Appendix

Job Titles and Descriptions Presented to Participants for Rating

High Consequence Jobs	Mid-Level Consequence Jobs	Low Consequence jobs
<p>Nuclear Power Reactor Operators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operate nuclear power reactors in accordance with policies and procedures to protect workers from radiation and to ensure environmental safety. • Adjust controls to position rod and to regulate flux level, reactor period, coolant temperature, or rate of power flow, following standard procedures. • Develop or implement actions such as lockouts, tagouts, or clearances to allow equipment to be safely repaired. • Respond to system or unit abnormalities, diagnosing the cause, and recommending or taking corrective action. • Monitor all systems for normal running conditions, performing activities such as checking gauges to assess output or the effects of generator loading on other equipment. 	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Office Machine Operators, Except Computer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operate office machines such as high-speed business photocopiers, readers, scanners, addressing machines, stencil-cutting machines, microfilm readers or printers, folding and inserting machines, bursters, and binder machines. • Read job orders to determine the type of work to be done, the quantities to be produced, and the materials needed. • Deliver completed work. • Place original copies in feed trays, feed originals into feed rolls, or position originals on tables beneath camera lenses. • Sort, assemble, and proof completed work.
<p>First-Line Supervisors of Correctional Officers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervise and direct the work of correctional officers to ensure the safe 		<p>First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct and supervise employees engaged in sales, inventory-taking,

<p>custody, discipline, and welfare of inmates.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain order, discipline, and security within assigned areas in accordance with relevant rules, regulations, policies, and laws. • Take, receive, or check periodic inmate counts. • Maintain knowledge of, comply with, and enforce all institutional policies, rules, procedures, and regulations. • Respond to emergencies, such as escapes. 	<p>N/A</p>	<p>reconciling cash receipts, or in performing services for customers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruct staff on how to handle difficult and complicated sales. • Provide customer service by greeting and assisting customers and responding to customer inquiries and complaints. • Examine merchandise to ensure that it is correctly priced and displayed and that it functions as advertised. • Monitor sales activities to ensure that customers receive satisfactory service and quality goods.
<p>Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine and inspect aircraft components, including landing gear, hydraulic systems, and deicers to locate cracks, breaks, leaks, or other problems. • Conduct routine and special inspections as required by regulations. • Inspect completed work to certify that maintenance meets standards and that aircraft are ready for operation. • Read and interpret maintenance manuals, service bulletins, and other specifications to determine the feasibility and method of repairing or replacing malfunctioning or damaged components. 	<p>Automotive Engineering Technicians</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document test results, using cameras, spreadsheets, documents, or other tools. • Set up mechanical, hydraulic, or electric test equipment in accordance with engineering specifications, standards, or test procedures. • Read and interpret blueprints, schematics, work specifications, drawings, or charts. • Inspect or test parts to determine nature or cause of defects or malfunctions. • Monitor computer-controlled test equipment, according to written or verbal instructions. 	<p>Audio and Video Equipment Technicians</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagnose and resolve media system problems. • Install, adjust, and operate electronic equipment to record, edit, and transmit radio and television programs, motion pictures, video conferencing, or multimedia presentations. • Direct and coordinate activities of assistants and other personnel during production. • Compress, digitize, duplicate, and store audio and video data. • Notify supervisors when major equipment repairs are needed.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain repair logs, documenting all preventive and corrective aircraft maintenance. 		
<p>Elevator Installer and Repairer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assemble, install, repair, and maintain elevators, escalators, moving sidewalks, and dumbwaiters, using hand and power tools, and testing devices such as test lamps, ammeters, and voltmeters. • Test newly installed equipment to ensure that it meets specifications, such as stopping at floors for set amounts of time. • Locate malfunctions in brakes, motors, switches, and signal and control systems, using test equipment. • Check that safety regulations and building codes are met, and complete service reports verifying conformance to standards. • Connect electrical wiring to control panels and electric motors. 	<p>Manufactured Building and Mobile Home Installer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seal open sides of modular units to prepare them for shipment, using polyethylene sheets, nails, and hammers. • Move and set up mobile homes or prefabricated buildings on owners' lots or at mobile home parks. • Inspect, examine, and test the operation of parts or systems to evaluate operating condition and to determine if repairs are needed. • Connect water hoses to inlet pipes of plumbing systems, and test operation of plumbing fixtures. • Remove damaged exterior panels, repair and replace structural frame members, and seal leaks, using hand tools. 	<p>Electronic Home Entertainment Equipment Installers and Repairer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disassemble entertainment equipment and repair or replace loose, worn, or defective components and wiring, using hand tools and soldering irons. • Install, service, and repair electronic equipment or instruments such as televisions, radios, and videocassette recorders. • Calibrate and test equipment, and locate circuit and component faults, using hand and power tools and measuring and testing instruments such as resistance meters and oscilloscopes. • Confer with customers to determine the nature of problems or to explain repairs. • Tune or adjust equipment and instruments to obtain optimum visual or auditory reception, according to specifications, manuals, and drawings.

Note: All tasks were presented in the order they were displayed on O*Net, which is also the top 5 most important tasks in descending order. The only exception is that for the job “First-Line Supervisors of Correctional Officers,” the task presented first in this study was originally the 5th most important task on O*Net. This change was made to highlight the supervisory aspect of the job in order to increase the similarity of job tasks between the high and low consequence jobs in this set.