

The Pennsylvania State University

The Graduate School

College of the Liberal Arts

**THE COST OF AIMING HIGH: EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
AMBITION AND INFORMATION SHARING**

A Thesis in

Psychology

by

Matthew P. Crayne

© 2014 Matthew P. Crayne

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Science

August 2014

The thesis of Matthew P. Crayne was reviewed and approved\* by the following:

Samuel T. Hunter  
Associate Professor of Psychology  
Thesis Advisor

Susan Mohammed  
Associate Professor of Psychology

Kenneth N. Levy  
Associate Professor of Psychology

Melvin M. Mark  
Professor of Psychology  
Head of the Department of Department or Graduate Program

\*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School

## ABSTRACT

Ambition has been characterized in the applied psychology and organizational research literature as a component of general motivation, effectively ignoring the possibility that it may be a unique construct. I contend that ambition is misrepresented and incorrectly measured by past research, and propose a new conceptualization of ambition as the interaction of two personality traits: need for achievement and achievement striving. The present research explored the effect of this trait interaction on the organizational outcome of information sharing, hypothesizing that ambitious individuals would be the most unlikely to share information with capable others. Additionally, the influence of the Machiavellian personality was considered as a factor that may increase the deleterious effects of ambitious personalities on information sharing behavior. Using a combination of both quantitative and qualitative behavioral data, the present study found partial support for the hypothesized moderation, but failed to support its operationalization of ambition as the presence of both high need for achievement and high achievement striving.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES .....	v
LIST OF FIGURES .....	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	vii
Chapter : Introduction .....	1
Background of Ambition Research .....	4
Misattributions of Ambition .....	10
Ambition and Information Sharing.....	12
Moderating Influence of Machiavellianism.....	18
Chapter 2: Methods.....	24
Participants .....	24
Procedures.....	24
Measures .....	27
Analyses.....	30
Chapter 3: Results.....	33
Tests of Hypothesis 1.....	34
Tests of Hypothesis 2.....	34
Tests of Hypothesis 3a.....	35
Tests of Hypothesis 3b.....	36
Chapter 4: Discussion .....	38
Study Limitations.....	41
Practical Implications .....	43
Future Research Directions .....	45
References.....	51
Appendix A: Covariates.....	60
Appendix B: Dependent Measures .....	62
Appendix C: Vignettes.....	66

**LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations of Included Variables.....	47
Table 2: Regression Analyses Testing the Moderation Effects.....	48

**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1: Interaction of Need for Achievement Moderated by Achievement Striving. ....	49
Figure 2: Interaction of Need for Achievement Moderated by Machiavellianism. ....	50

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the tireless work of my thesis advisor, Dr. Sam Hunter, without whom this project would never have come to light. He provided support, encouragement, and constructive criticism when it was most needed, always placing my development and the goals of my project as a top priority. I will be ever grateful for his enthusiasm and guidance during the first major research undertaking of my career. Additionally, I would like to thank Dr. Susan Mohammed and Dr. Ken Levy for serving on my committee. Their professional insight was invaluable to making my thesis a success. Additionally, I would like to acknowledge my coding team and members of the Pennsylvania State University's Leadership and Innovation Lab for their excellent work. A special acknowledgement is for Dr. Barry Schapira, who provided guidance and mentorship during my transition to graduate school. Finally, I would like to sincerely thank my family and friends who have been unwavering sources of support and love throughout this process. Mom, Dad, and Jenni: thank you for being there for me when I needed it most and always believing that I could achieve my dreams. I am able to be here today only because of all of you.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

*“Ambition is so powerful a passion in the human breast, that however high we reach we are never satisfied” – Niccolo Machiavelli*

Ambition is often used to describe the drive for success and achievement that is of such great value in today's society. Ambitious individuals have many faces, be it the corporate shark effortlessly climbing the management ladder or the entrepreneur who risks everything on a dream company. The construct of ambition has both negative and positive connotations depending on its context. Individuals who are described as having great ambition are sometimes viewed as heroic figures, overcoming great adversity and hardship to tackle difficult obstacles or achieve life-long dreams. Other depictions of ambition are sinister, portraying those who are ambitious as aggressive, power-hungry bullies who care for no one and nothing apart from their personal gain. The ugly side of ambition is one that catches the eye of the public and popular media, but has a tendency to go unrealized in organizations until it is too late. Indeed, there is little research into the negative aspects of ambition in the workplace and its reality as an organizational danger.

Consider, as an illustration, a case in the trading world. In April of 2001, Jeffrey Skilling was named CEO of Enron, one of the world's largest and most successful energy trading companies. Less than six months later he had resigned, and was soon to be indicted on charges of conspiracy, fraud, and other crimes along with members of

Enron's executive board (McLean, 2003). Skilling deliberately withheld information, deceived employees, and lied to shareholders in order to rise to the top of a business empire. When Enron inevitably filed for bankruptcy, his blind ambition was responsible for thousands of lost jobs, ruined livelihoods, and broken dreams (McLean, 2003). Such examples pose the question: what do we really know about ambition, and what are the consequences that can result when it is misguided?

Historical examples like the collapse of Enron offer a powerful perspective through which to view ambition. In the discussion of whether ambition is inherently good or bad, a perspective that is not taken in organizational research is that the focus of the discussion should be the *object* of ambition rather than the construct itself (Pettigrove, 2007). An ability to view ambitious action in this way would be incredibly useful to organizations and society in general. Pettigrove continues, "if ambition leads one to disregard the needs and interests of others in contexts where one has an obligation to attend to such, then it is problematic" (2007, pg. 62). The deviance and organizational issues seen with regard to ambition are often the result of actions that an individual views as having the direct potential to appease their desires, with little concern for the impact on others. However, the applied psychology and organizational behavior research fields have had little success in developing effective strategies for limiting the impact of misguided ambition. Unfortunately, it is probable that these issues are difficult to avoid or remedy because we are still unaware of what makes up the ambitious individual. The absence of a clear image of ambition's composition has left researchers few options for relevant empirical study and intervention development.

This is likely to result of a stagnant view of ambition in past organizational research, where ambitious personalities and behavior have been classified as only outward expressions of goal setting behavior (see Locke & Latham, 2002; DesRochers & Dahir, 2000; Locke, 1996). A limited research scope fails to consider that ambition may be more complex than has been previously thought, and may be a facet of personality that can be measured and predicted. If this is the case, the literature has only begun to scratch the surface in understanding how ambitious individuals behave, and how those behaviors affect people and organizations around them for better or worse. It is imperative that consideration be given to alternative models of ambition in order to draw well-rounded conclusions about its effect in the real world.

The present study proposes a new conceptualization of ambition, the goal of which is to address these issues and present a more complete model of the ambitious personality. I aim to demonstrate that the ambitious personality is one that manifests in a more complex manner than has been previously assumed, and that a proclivity towards achievement-oriented behavior is not the only factor that must be considered when labeling an individual as ambitious. The manifestation of two distinct personality constructs, namely need for achievement and achievement striving, are considered indicative of the ambitious personality. These achievement-oriented constructs are thought to be similar, yet distinct (Moon, 2005), and may shed light on previously unconsidered elements of ambitious behavior. Further, this research is primarily focused on the negative impact that ambition may have on important organizational functions, namely information sharing. A number of theoretical and empirical perspectives are

incorporated to create an image of the ambitious individual, and how ambition may leave one vulnerable to making mistakes with the potential for large negative impacts.

### **Background of Ambition Research**

Past literature has speculated as to what ambition is, yet there is a dearth of research into the phenomenon itself. Although there have been attempts to measure individual ambition, the conclusions drawn from these studies are subject to some scrutiny. Work by DesRochers and Dahir (2000), for instance, considered ambition to be a motivational aspect of commitment and measured the construct with items that referenced the importance of moving up in an organization or one's profession. Hansson, Hogan, Johnson, & Schroeder (1983) used the California Psychological Inventory to develop an ambition scale which consisted of true-false items such as "I always try to do at least a little better than what is expected of me". Despite these studies, and others like them, some aspects of ambition, their scope is too narrow to measure critical components of the complete construct. The complexity and depth of the ambitious personality has not yet been realized, perhaps as a result of its difficulty in measurement.

Indeed, it seems that researchers in applied psychology have generally seen efforts to measure ambition as a waste of intellectual energy and resources, not fruitful enough to warrant delving any deeper than previous efforts already have. It has become a buzzword that incites a litany of comparisons to other constructs, likely in an attempt to divert the reader from the fact that there has been little done to distinguish ambition as it's own unique property. Generally speaking, the consensus has been that ambition is

simply a way of framing the goal-setting behavior and motivation of an individual, and that it is not its own independent construct. In other words, ambition is considered a motivational state in which a person is more likely to set and achieve goals. This is a narrow view and lends itself to inappropriate measurement from the outset.

A considerable amount of literature has equated the construct of need for achievement (McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, & Lowell, 1953) or achievement motivation with the measurement of individual ambition (e.g. Ziegler, Schmit-Atzert, Buhner, & Krumm, 2007). Need for achievement (N-Ach) describes the likelihood that an individual will be satisfied by achieving a goal, or having a general accomplishment. Because ambition has long been viewed as synonymous with goal-setting, it has seemed logical in the past to consider a previously validated construct such as N-Ach as an accurate representation of an individual's tendency toward ambitious action. However, those who score highly on N-Ach measures tend to set and achieve goals of only mild or moderate complexity and difficulty (Turban & Keon, 1993; Duckworth, Peterson, Matthew, & Kelly, 2007). This is presumably because their ultimate goal is the satisfaction that is associated with the success of the achievement itself. To avoid the possibility of failure and subsequent disappointment, the individual in question wants to set goals that they already know they will be able to accomplish. Although this conceptualization demonstrates an individual's tendency to achieve, it hardly conjures the image of an ambitious man or woman setting their sights on seats of power and working until they can climb no higher. It is my contention that this is because N-Ach lacks an element that is crucial to describing an individual who has legitimate ambition: a willingness to strive.

Although a multitude of definitions for ambition exist in the English language, they all speak to the same combination of principles. *That is, ambition is the desire for an achievement of some kind and the willingness to strive for its attainment.* This differs considerably from past definitions in psychology research (e.g. Elchardus & Smits, 2008; Van Vainen, 1999; Turner, 1964), which ignore the element of consistent striving towards a greater achievement. The addition of a striving element is crucial to truly understanding ambitious individuals and their pursuits. The willingness to commit time and effort that is beyond the norm is the distinguishing factor that places ambition as distinct from general achievement motivation.

This condition of actively pursuing an achievement over time also addresses the concern that the individual's achievement itself is not particularly challenging, as would be seen in those who were only focused on N-Ach (Duckworth et al., 2007). Actively working towards a level of achievement requires considerable investment of time and energy, resources that are not spent without good cause. The ambitious person does not see their pursuits as a misuse of their precious resources because they view the outcomes of their potential achievement as being greater than the losses they may incur by getting there.

The political science literature speaks to this point directly through what is simply known as Ambition Theory. The theory posits that politicians make decisions based on the potential benefits they can see in attaining an alternate position *or* the probability they see in achieving those positions in question (Hibbing, 1986). This concept translates well to organizational leadership, as individuals who are actively attempting to “climb the corporate ladder” act similarly to a political office seeker by doing what they feel is

necessary to gain that position. Research by Meserve, Pemstein, and Bernhard (2009) examined this concept further by recording the voting behaviors of parliamentary politicians who were or were not presently seeking a higher office. The analyses demonstrated a trend of individuals generally voting along with the norms of their political party, unless they had aspirations for a new political office or appointment. The authors concluded that the ambition of these individuals, after weighing the costs and potential benefits of their voting behavior, was responsible for their break from norms. The reward of possibly reaching a higher political office was simply greater than the personal or social costs that may have occurred from straying from the party line.

Although ambition is not referenced directly, the idea of an ongoing cost-benefit analysis is present in a large portion of applied psychology and organizational research. Vroom's seminal expectancy theory (1964) contends that individuals make decisions based on the attractiveness of an outcome, the probability of attaining it, and the expectation that driven effort will lead to what is desired. Individuals are driven to decisions by weighing the importance of an outcome against the effort and obstacles that may prevent one from obtaining it. This focus placed on outcomes through expectancy theory is crucial to defining an individual's ambition. Without the expectation of some kind of reward the concentrated effort seen in ambitious endeavors would be considered wasteful. In their newly released paper on antecedents to ambition, Judge and Kammeyer-Mueller (2012) echo this sentiment stating "a highly ambitious person would be particularly interested in ensuring that his or her efforts were tied to tangible outcomes of success like promotions or pay raises" (pg. 760). Past research has made an effort to relate expectancy theory to actions such as self motivated goal setting (Tubbs, Boehne, &

Dahl, 1993) and goal commitment (Klein & Wright, 1994; Tubbs, 1993). Despite ambition being independent of those, the inclination towards working steadfastly for achievement is a key component to its definition, and one that must be reconciled as its own concept.

The concept of achievement striving is not new to the applied psychology literature. In fact, achievement striving is a known subscale within the Five Factor Model (FFM) construct of conscientiousness (Mount & Barrick, 1995). As a component of conscientiousness, achievement striving depicts an individual's likelihood to maintain consistent, concerted efforts towards a goal that will result in a personal achievement. Past research has supported the use of the achievement striving (Ach-Striv) items found in the FFM as a measure that is independent of and distinct from conscientiousness (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Mount & Barrick, 1995). The authors touted the scale's relevance in measuring a unique facet of an individual's motivation. This idea has found support in the literature (e.g. Moon, 2001) with authors delving deeper into the uniqueness of the Ach-Striv construct. Moon (2001) specifically describes Ach-Striv as a "self-centered" construct, contending that the achievements motivated by this trait are likely to be focused on the individual rather than pro-social or other outcomes.

Costa and McCrae (1992) made a similar claim stating that individual that scored highly on Ach-Striv measures had "high aspiration and work[ed] hard to achieve their goals"; the construct speaking only to the individual's personal drive towards success. Further, research by Hough (1992) found that Ach-Striv was positively related to managerial advancement, and posits that "within a situation in which individual attainment might be both glorified and encouraged, levels of achievement striving would

be positively related to job performance”. This is an important distinction to make, as it is also thought that ambition is an inherently selfish trait (Pettigrove, 2007).

It is true that an individual’s ambition may cause them to accomplish something that serves the good of others or their organization as a whole. However, it is likely that his or her ultimate, if subconscious, motivation is the *personal* gain that is the expected result of his or her efforts. Judge and Kammeyer-Mueller (2012) supported this operationalization of ambition, but warned against considering Ach-Striv as a measure of ambition by itself. Similarly, these authors discussed the probable correlation between N-Ach and ambition while strongly advocating a distinction between the two.

With these factors in mind, a strong case can be made that consideration of both the N-Ach and Ach-Striv constructs is necessary for a more complete understanding of individual ambition. The lack of significant findings in past ambition research points to an error in the way the construct has been operationalized and subsequently measured. These issues have been the product of a view of ambition that is too narrow in focus. Past research does not recognize that ambition may be the result of an interaction of traits rather than a single construct. While they may seem operationally similar, research as demonstrated that measures of achievement motivation and goal striving load as distinct constructs, and the interaction of the two may result in an effect that is greater than the sum of its parts (e.g. Job, Langens, & Brandstatter, 2009).

If we consider ambition in this light (i.e. an interaction of N-Ach and Ach-Striv) we will be able to tease apart the subtle differences between ambitious individuals and those who are motivated in other ways. This is important to consider, as different impetuses for motivation may themselves predict different outcomes. More traditional

notions of ambition may lack elements that are critical to understanding the impact that the ambitious personality has on outcomes of interest. With regard to negative organizational outcomes this may be particularly salient, as the self-centered focus of Ach-Striv may explain variance that would otherwise remain unconsidered. The present research conceptualizes ambition in a manner that aims to be productive in explaining organizational phenomena that are underexplored for an achievement motivation perspective.

### **Misattributions of Ambition**

As important as it is to revise the thinking of what ambition is, it is equally necessary to discuss what ambition is not. Past literature has placed ambition as practically synonymous with generalized goal setting (Locke & Latham, 2002; DesRochers & Dahir, 2000; Locke, 1996), a misattribution that has made serious research into ambition as an independent construct increasingly difficult to justify. Goal setting differs from ambition in that ambition is not focused on an accomplishment specifically, but on the overarching *reward* that is expected to follow from that accomplishment (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012). To quote Glen Pettigrove:

“Ordinarily the objects of ambition are such as allow of continual, unending increase. One does not just want to earn a six figure salary; one wants wealth. One does not merely want to publish the book; one wants to become a better (or more respected, or more prolific) writer” (Pettigrove, 2007; pg. 57)

A similar logic follows to differentiate ambition from general motivation. While the Ach-Striv construct does indeed touch on the concept of achievement and is included in this paper's conceptualization of ambition, it has been established that motivation alone is insufficient as an explanation of ambition (Judge and Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012). Individuals may be motivated to engage in a host of activities, as motivation describes any stimulus that incites a person to an action. Ambition goes beyond motivation by pushing towards a series or pattern of actions that they see as necessary for the accomplishment of a grand end. A motivated individual may be inspired to apply for a new job, where an ambitious person applies for the job with the idea of using that position as a stepping-stone for future accomplishment (see the arguments of Pettigrove, 2007). It is the long-term process that is inherently found in ambition that makes it distinct from any single, motivated action.

This view of ambition, as distinct from both goal-setting and general motivation, gives us cause to reevaluate what we thought we knew about ambition in the workplace. The self-centeredness and personal focus that sits at the heart of ambition will change the relationship an ambitious individual has with his or her job and organization as a whole. This consistent striving towards personal gain may lead to dramatic organizational outcomes. Although it is likely that some of these outcomes are positive and beneficial, it is when they are detrimental that they are of greatest importance.

Information sharing is one important domain in which ambition may have a deleterious effect. The successful sharing of information is generally accepted as a crucial organizational function (Li & Lin, 2006; Mesmer-Magnus & DeChurch, 2009; Yu, Yan, & Cheng, 2001). Due to modern technology, the specialization of jobs, and differing skill

sets in the workplace, work has become generally more collaborative (Mesmer-Magnus & DeChurch, 2009). Indeed, the input of multiple individuals is often necessary for the successful integration of knowledge, which can be crucial to the success of a project or task. The transfers of information among peers, leaders and subordinates, and between leaders, are important exchanges that allow for decisions to be made accurately and more efficiently.

Understanding the importance of information sharing to organizational outcomes, one can see where disruptions of the knowledge sharing process may have strong adverse effects. In an organizational structure that is rooted in the ability to acquire and distribute information successfully to others, even a single impediment has the potential to prove extremely costly. Ambitious individuals may have the potential to be this impediment. The ambitious person, with a dominant focus on personal achievement, is more likely to behave in a manner that is directly self-serving than pro-social or pro-organizational. Thus, understanding the value of knowledge and information, ambitious individuals may be prone to disrupting information exchanges in the pursuit of personal goals. The placement of personal accomplishment over the well-being of the organization is an issue that may have tremendous impact on organizations, with few able to recognize it before the damage is done.

### **Ambition and Information Sharing**

As we have seen in countless historical examples, ambitious individuals often rise to positions of leadership and power within organizations. Indeed, research has demonstrated that ambitious individuals tend to have higher levels of educational and

career attainment over their lifespans than those who are not considered ambitious (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012). The question that often goes unanswered, however, is a simple one: what did they do to get there?

Pettigrove outlines four distinct features that describe ambition and its pursuits: 1) the self-disciplined commitment to achieve the object that is desired, 2) the commitment to the objective is demonstrated through actions, 3) the objective is distal and requires consistent work over time, and 4) the focus of the ambition is understood to be a difficult achievement (Pettigrove, 2007). An ambitious individual's striving for attainment is a long-term, self-oriented process composed of a consistent pattern of behaviors. The decisions made and actions performed are those which the individual views as giving him or her the greatest possibility for success, potentially at the expense of others.

Although the components of ambition make in inherently self-centered, it is also a competitive construct (Pettigrove, 2007). As was discussed previously, ambitious individuals are satisfied not only by the achievement of a goal but by the broader reward they see as a direct result of that achievement. It would not be enough to simply complete a task that was challenging and resource exhausting; the ambitious person needs to feel that they are personally superior to others for having accomplished their specific objective. A direct obstacle to this feeling of superiority and accomplishment would be if another person were able to reap the same reward; if another person accomplishes the same or a similar goal it is likely to be fairly disappointing (Pettigrove, 2007). With this in mind, it is highly plausible that ambitious persons would

do whatever was within their power to prevent this disappointment and dilution of their reward.

Organizations are at their best when they utilize the talents of their employees effectively; both leaders and subordinate employees. For this reason, managers and team leaders are often surrounded with individuals who possess functional knowledge in specific disciplines that they may not personally be experts in, in the hope that knowledge transfer will allow for high productivity across functional domains. This has been demonstrated to be an effective practice, which generally leads to increased productivity (Keller, 2001; Olson, Walker, & Reukert, 1995). However, if a leader were to deliberately impede upon the information sharing process it could have seriously detrimental effects on organizational outcomes.

The conceptualization of ambition provided in this study is concerned with that effect. Ambition is a selfish construct, and it is likely that ambitious leaders will do what they can to ensure that they do not have to share any of the credit or subsequent reward with any other individual. By not sharing information, a leader can make the claim that any decisions he or she arrives at were of his or her own concept; they need not attribute any credit to another person because they did not use anyone else's input. Therefore, it is likely that ambitious individuals will be unlikely to share information well with others.

As discussed by Moon (2001), Ach-Striv provides the self-centered focus of ambition. When moderated by Ach-Striv, the neutral construct of N-Ach becomes focused on the achievements that are likely to benefit the individual only, subsequently ignoring the potential ill effects that actions towards that goal may have on those around

them. In the context of information sharing, these self-focused individuals will see the value that lies in maximizing their own exposure to relevant information, while neglecting to include capable others in the knowledge transfer process. Although sharing information with others may increase the likelihood of performing the task efficiently, these individuals are likely to see the possibility of having to share in their accomplishments if they do so. The drive for personal accomplishment in this case is so great that individuals will deliberately withhold crucial information so that they can ensure their solitude in reaping the benefits. In keeping with this new model of ambition (i.e. an interaction of N-Ach and Ach-Striv), this study proposes that the relationship between N-Ach and information sharing is made more negative by an individual's level of Ach-Striv.

However, this effect is reliant on an individual's N-Ach being high. An individual who has low N-Ach is unlikely to see the advantage in withholding or not sharing information and knowledge. The desire to limit the impact of perceived competitors, as can be seen in high N-Ach individuals, is not as salient in this condition. Additionally, low N-Ach individuals are not likely to gain intrinsic satisfaction from achievements, and so their focus may be present in others aspects of their task.

The presence of high Ach-Striv in low N-Ach individuals is quite possible, representing itself in individuals who set goals out of personal motivation and with no ulterior motives or "end" to satisfy. Although these actions are an exercise in achievement, they are not a necessary component of the individual's personality and thus are not likely to compel one to disenfranchise others at their expense. It is only as N-Ach increases that the personal focus of Ach-Striv will move a person towards more selfish

action. Individuals who are not particularly satisfied by achievements are unlikely to be impacted by a willingness to strive towards difficult goals since they have little reason to desire those accomplishments in the first place. Therefore:

*H1: Ach-Striv moderates the relationship between N-Ach and information sharing and this negative association is stronger for individuals who have higher levels of N-Ach.*

The interaction between these two constructs certainly lends us an image of a driven, achievement-oriented individual who is likely to work tirelessly in pursuit of the object of their desire. However, variability in the level of each trait can have a significant impact on how this individual behaves. As was discussed by Judge and Kammeyer-Mueller (2012), neither N-Ach nor Ach-Striv is comprehensive enough to explain ambition on its own. With regard to this model, an active ambition can be described when an individual scores highly on measures of *both* N-Ach and Ach-Striv. While other combinations of these traits may trend towards ambition, only high levels of both provide sufficient explanation for the actions (or inactions) of ambitious individuals. With this in mind:

*H2: The relationship between N-Ach and information sharing will be more negative when Ach-Striv is high than when it is low.*

Ambitious individuals are likely to become engrossed in the focus of their ambition. As such, the desired achievement becomes a “white whale” of sorts, and one

that does all but elude the ambitious pursuer. While not intentionally malicious, it is thought that ambition is a naturally competitive construct (Pettigrove, 2007). These individuals are likely to do what they can to ensure that they, and they alone, are the recipient of their desired achievement. Thus, in a scenario when possession of certain information is necessary for achievement of a goal, ambitious individuals are unlikely to share their information well with others. The risk of allowing another person to share in or, perhaps accomplish first, the desired achievement is simply too great for the ambitious individual to bear.

The nature of ambition is one that lends itself to instances of poor decision-making in the name of achievement. Stories of individuals working diligently towards grand plans and projects often involve failings of some kind. Although ambitious individuals may make mistakes that result in poor outcomes for others, it is unlikely that those outcomes are intentional. It is not the direct goal of the ambitious person to disenfranchise or sabotage some other person or group, but an unfortunate consequence.

However, there are those who look to undermining behaviors directly in order to accomplish their goals. These individuals view the success of others as a threat, and attempt to exploit their peers and subordinates through manipulation and political skill. The expense of others is of little importance to those who meet this description; they care only for themselves and the path towards achievement that will give them the least resistance. This personality is dangerous when present in organizations and, unfortunately, difficult to identify until it is too late.

### **Moderating Influence of Machiavellianism**

Organizational collapses and scandals like those at Enron highlighted the darker side of human personality at work. High-ranking corporate officials exploiting both employees and the public to meet their own personal ends became a widely discussed topic in the popular press. As such, the past decade of organizational research literature saw a substantial increase in the number of articles highlighting “dark” personality characteristics and their impact on the workplace. Studies ranging from exploration of emotional intelligence manipulation (e.g. Nagler, Reiter, Furtner, & Rauthmann, 2014), to the influence of darker personality traits on career choice (e.g. Furnham, Hyde, & Trickey, 2014), to the creation of the “Dark Triad” personality schema (Paulhus & Williams, 2002), continue to develop in order to better understand these traits at work in organizations. However, one trait in particular is of considerable interest to the present research.

Niccolo Machiavelli’s historical reputation as a cynical, conniving political mastermind has endured through the centuries through his infamous work, *The Prince*. His impact has been so great that he lends his moniker to the personality trait of Machiavellianism, a construct that describes individuals as cutthroat and deviant as their namesake. Machiavellianism describes individuals who are cynical, politically skilled, willingly deviant, and maliciously manipulative when they see prospects for personal gain (Christie & Geis, 1970). As outlined by Dahling, Kuyumcu, and Librizzi (2012), Machiavellian individuals are likely to engage in a variety of unethical and counterproductive workplace behaviors if they believe that these actions will lead to a reward that they find valuable. While the trait is distinct from other constructs such as

narcissism and clinical or sub-clinical psychopathy, individuals who are identified as Machiavellian are generally self obsessed and likely to focus their actions on creating scenarios where they prosper over others (Paulhus & Williams, 2002; Dahling et al. 2012).

When Machiavellians are placed in positions of power they can be particularly dangerous to organizations; after all, leadership positions allow Machiavellians to execute their skillful manipulation under the guise of normal leading and decision-making. It is likely that most Machiavellians exhibit the traits that would describe them as ambitious; dedicated, prolonged action towards the achievement of goals that place them in a position for exponential gains. Research has demonstrated that Machiavellians are likely to set extrinsic goals more than intrinsic, and strive for achievements like financial success while not engaging in pro-social behavior (McHoskey, 1999). These individuals are motivated simply by the prospect of achieving something that others cannot, and actively working to ensure that scenario.

Considering the Machiavellian personality, it is not hard to imagine these individuals exploiting the information exchange in organizations to their benefit. Information is, after all, an incredibly valuable and limited resource. Liu (2008) proposed that knowledge and information are the ultimate source of competitive advantage in the workplace, with knowledge sharing being a way to increase the competitiveness of others. In keeping with this, Liu's research found that Machiavellianism had a significant negative relationship with information sharing. Gunnthorsdottir, McCabe, and Smith (2002) examined Machiavellianism during a bargaining game and found that Machiavellians were less likely to share information or reciprocate a "bargain" when not

doing so was in their best interest. All of the Machiavellian action was focused on creating the best possible scenario in which the individual would prosper. It is apparent that Machiavellians view information as too valuable a commodity to share freely with others who could find success from its use.

Although it is likely that Machiavellians are ambitious individuals, it is not a necessary component of ambition. Individuals who are not motivated towards achievement of any kind are likely to be unaffected by Machiavellianism with regard to information sharing, unless it is a substantial part of their personality. In individuals with only a slight tendency towards manipulative behavior and little satisfaction from achievement, there is likely little incentive to confound the information sharing process. These individuals are not likely to see social exploitation or undermining as important or appealing, and so would not see the benefit in withholding important information from others. Machiavellianism reflects the tendency to act in a manner that may harm others when the situation presents a strong incentive for the Machiavellian individual (Christie & Geis, 1970, Paulhus & Williams, 2002). A low intrinsic desire for achievement depicts an individual who has no external goal that would call for manipulative or deceitful actions against another person. These individuals are unlikely to be a threat with regard to their personal attitudes impeding the progress of organizational goals, as they are unlikely to place any personal motivations as the center of their attention.

However, individuals who are very likely to be satisfied by achievement are indeed likely to be strongly effected by Machiavellian tendencies. Machiavellianism is a powerful personality trait, and those who are satisfied by achieving goals as well as even slightly likely to engage in unethical behavior are a dangerous combination. Alone,

Machiavellianism has been consistently associated with poorer job performance and increased CWB (O'Boyle, Forsyth, & Banks, 2012). The interaction of N-Ach and Ach-Striv creates a scenario where a motivated, goal-focused individual is also endowed with interpersonal and political skill.

Despite potentially having only minor Machiavellian tendencies, these individuals are likely to use these skills to their advantage in identifying ways to manipulate their environments and those around them to meet their selfish ends (Dahling et al, 2012). The shrewd conservation or deliberately unbalanced sharing of information would be an attractive option for any Machiavellian individuals (Liu, 2008). The trend towards manipulation and counterproductive behavior in even low-level Machiavellians is likely to cause a more negative trend in information sharing when N-Ach is high.

*H3a: Machiavellianism moderates the relationship between N-Ach and information sharing; this negative association is stronger for individuals who have higher levels of N-Ach.*

Unconsidered up to this point is the impact Machiavellianism would have in a truly ambitious individual. That is, an individual with both a high N-Ach and high Ach-Striv. These individuals already act in a way that is self-centered and directed towards personal achievement, yet they are not necessarily prone towards deliberately undermining others or engaging in explicit counterproductive work behaviors. The addition of a Machiavellian personality would have a profound effect on ambitious

individuals such that their personalized focus would be directed towards a darker, more malicious side of workplace interaction.

The combination of ambition with a high tendency towards Machiavellian behavior is a recipe for organizational disaster. These individuals are not only likely to withhold information (e.g. Liu, 2008; Gunnthorsdottir et al. 2002), but they are more likely to do so with the explicit intent of sabotaging others while they gain personally. The self-centered focus of ambition creates a powerful incentive towards working only for the individual's goals; this is only exacerbated by a natural proclivity towards unethical workplace behaviors. Seeing information as the valuable commodity that it is, ambitious Machiavellians are likely to see competitive advantage in possessing knowledge, as well as accumulating new information while capable others do not. This theoretically increases their chances for success at their task while simultaneously placing their contemporaries at a significant disadvantage. The result is a tendency towards maximizing the value of one's own information while limiting that of peers, with the ultimate goal being a personal accomplishment that comes after knowing the expense it may cost others. Therefore:

*H3b: Information sharing will be least likely when individuals are higher in N-Ach, Ach-Striv, and Machiavellianism.*

The addition of Machiavellianism as a moderator in this model provides a well-rounded image of the harmful ambition archetype. These people are focused, driven, self-serving, and manipulative while they live out a "win-at-all-costs" philosophy. Fiction and

the popular media attempt to show us exaggerations of this character; Gordon Gekko and his “greed is good” mantra are a caricature of the power-hungry villains that represent so much of what the general public detests in ambition (Stone, 1987). Alas, this is not only the work of Hollywood. The modern workplace is rife with individuals who strive furiously for their own achievements with no regard for the well-being or outcomes of others. Ambition “has the potential to be a crucial virtue as well as a devastating vice” (Pettigrove, 2007, pg. 67); a strong and healthy tool when it is put to good use, but a destructive force when it is underestimated or misguided. There will always be a Jeffrey Skilling or a Gordon Gekko in this world. Understanding what individuals like these are capable of and what they are likely to do is the first step in limiting their negative impact on others.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Methods**

#### **Participants and Procedures**

##### ***1.0 Participants***

The undergraduate participant pool in the Penn State Department of Psychology was used to field a research sample. Research participants were all enrolled students between the ages of 18 and 28 ( $M = 18.89$  years). The sample was primarily composed of female participants ( $n = 257$ ; 78.9% female, 16% male).

##### ***2.0 Procedure***

After recording their demographic information, participants were asked to complete a battery of personality surveys to assess individual NAch, AchStriv, and Machiavellianism as well as Big Five personality traits. Being that they were to be used as predictor variables, assessing these personality traits before the measurement of any behavioral tendencies was imperative. Several measure of the dependent variable (willingness to share information), were designed to prime individuals towards reflecting their natural ambitious tendencies. Thus, it was necessary to avoid any possibility of the primes acting as confounds when measuring personality constructs.

Participants were presented with three vignette-based primes which acted as assessments of behavioral tendencies and, thus, measures of the criterion. The goal of priming the participants is to place them in a state of mind in which they are most likely

to describe themselves and their behavioral tendencies in an accurate and authentic way. Research has supported the assertion that individuals are likely to behave in a manner that is more indicative of their natural selves when they have their identity activated by a situational force (Farmer & Van Dyne, 2010). Presenting participants with hypothetical scenarios is thought to allow their natural inclinations for action to be more accurately represented than if they were simply given a self-report questionnaire. In their paper on Self-Determination Theory, Ryan and Deci (2000) discussed what they referred to as “autonomy” oriented motivation; a state in which an individual makes choices based on accurate and non-defensive perception of their feelings and psychological needs. This trend towards authenticity is the result of the individual being in an environment and state of mind that activates the truest components of his or her personality. Expanding on this research, Hodgins, Yacko, and Gottlieb (2006) demonstrated that individuals could be primed to more readily express this type of authenticity, and were less likely to want to escape the situation or describe themselves in a defensive manner. Priming allows researchers to tap into an individual’s natural proclivities, while maintaining control over the information that the participant is exposed to.

Priming has been used in the social psychology literature to place participants in a state of mind that is conducive to assessing specific aspects of their authentic personality (e.g. Kraus & Chen, 2009; Gillath, Sesko, Shaver, & Chun, 2010). In the present study, participants were tasked with reading three separate scenario vignettes and recording in detail how they would respond to each scenario. Two of the three vignettes were presented in an open text-response format, in which each participant was responsible for recording what action he or she would take and the rationale behind it. The third vignette

provided 5 multiple-choice options, each describing a behavior that was coded for how well it fit the ambitious personality described above. The vignettes were written to place the participant in hypothetical situation in which they could choose to share or not share information with others in the workplace for various reasons. Coworkers were described as being highly skilled and capable in their jobs, and participants were assessed for whether or not their information-sharing tendencies were colored by their personal aspirations. Each vignette was constructed with consideration of the standards for vignette writing: clarity, plausibility, contextual richness, internal consistency, and moderate complexity (see Barter & Renold, 1999; Wason, Polansky, & Hyman, 2002).

These vignettes were designed to tap into each individual's natural tendencies towards action if her or she were placed in the same situation in the real world. Although the exercise is hypothetical, participants were placed in a state of mind that is similar to how they would think in reality. The vignettes described situations in which the participant has an opportunity to share important information with a capable peer. The participant was told that there are incentives to both share and not share information, and was asked to make a decision and explain his or her thought process.

Immediately after responding to the vignettes, participants were asked to complete a measure of their willingness to share information. Assessing this characteristic after the priming of the vignettes is appropriate as it is reliant on context; ambitious individuals may be perfectly willing to share information with others before they have been exposed to an incentive that drives them to feel otherwise. The vignettes, in addition to the willingness to share information scale, were used as measures of the dependent variable: willingness to share information. The advantage to this method over

an experimental design or lab study is that all participants were given the opportunity to act from a position of self-leadership, providing potential for greater variability in results based on their personal preferences. Not manipulating the situation the participant is in, aside from presenting him or her with a scenario to respond to, allows each individual the freedom to assume the role of their choosing. Thus, the variance in responses seen with this method of data collection is less vulnerable to confounding influences that may be present when bringing participants into the lab.

### ***3.0 Measures***

#### ***Need for Achievement.***

Cassidy and Lynn (1989) developed a scale achievement motivation, which adapted critical elements from McClelland's (1953) measures of need for achievement and the concept of worth ethic developed by Weber (1904). The authors state that the combination of these two elements works to create a more complete measure of achievement motivation that is less susceptible to situational variables. This scale is necessary to record and assess the intrinsic satisfaction that an individual will have after achieving a goal of unspecified difficulty. The measure used was reduced from 52 items to 23, by removing items that the authors (Cassidy & Lynn, 1989) reported as having sub-standard reliability. An equitable number of items were removed from each facet of the scale that the authors reported in an effort to limit the length of each participant's data collection and avoid burnout. The adjusted scale reported a Chronbach's alpha of .71, a statistic calculated with the method prescribed by Gulliksen (1950) for assessing

reliability in dichotomous scales. A sample item reads, “I find satisfaction in working as well as I can”.

### ***Achievement Striving.***

The NEO-PI-R, as developed by Costa and McCrae (1992), contains a scale of achievement striving as a sub-scale in their measure of conscientiousness. This scale is composed of 10 items, seven positively and three negatively keyed, and measured from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) on a Likert-type scale. This scale is designed to access the long-term, self-focused achievement desires of individuals; a sample item is “I turn plans into actions”. The literature supports measuring achievement striving as a construct that is independent of conscientiousness and other personality measures (e.g. Costa and McCrae, 1992; Moon, 2001) despite its original construction as a facet scale. In the present study, this scale reported a Chronbach’s alpha of 0.90.

### ***Machiavellianism.***

This study employed the Machiavellianism Personality Scale developed by Dahling, Whitaker, and Levy (2009). The authors recorded scale reliability as  $\alpha = .82$ , for a 16-item measure on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) Likert-type scale. Dahling et al. (2009)’s measure provides a clear indication of an individual’s Machiavellian and manipulative tendencies, with items such as: “I am willing to sabotage the efforts of other people if they threaten my own goals”. In this study, the scale reported a Chronbach’s alpha of 0.85.

### ***Willingness to Share Information.***

Assessing how willing an individual is to share important, potentially critical information with others is paramount to this study. Liu (2008) suggests using the knowledge sharing willingness scale developed by Davenport and Prusak (2000) and Alavi and Leidner (2001). This measure is a 12-item Likert-type scale, with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). A sample item reads: “I am happy to share my ideas or listen to others’ opinions”. This scale reported a Chronbach’s alpha of .89 in the present study.

### ***Demographics and Covariates.***

Participants were asked to record their age, gender, and race for demographic considerations. Additionally, participants were also asked to complete the standard Big Five personality inventory (BFI). The inventory consists of 50 items that are measured on a 1 (disagree strongly) to 5 (agree strongly) Likert type scale. This measure reports an alpha value of .83. Inclusion of the BFI was primarily exploratory, examining the prevalence of certain personality traits in ambitious individuals.

### ***Qualitative Vignettes.***

Three qualitative measures of willingness to share information were created for this study, in the form of vignettes. Vignettes 1 and 2 provided participants with descriptive scenarios to which they were asked to respond with how they would act personally, with responses coded for how willing to share information an individual was. Vignette 3 again provided a written scenario, but then provided 5 multiple-choice options

describing different behaviors from which the participant was asked to choose which best matched how he or she would act. These vignettes were constructed using the standards set out in several literatures (see Barter & Renold, 1999; Wason, Polansky, & Hyman, 2002). A team of three research assistants was trained in coding the participant responses. A pilot sample of 100 responses was used to develop benchmarks for a coding schema, during which time four different information-sharing “levels” were determined. Coders expressed high interrater agreement ( $ICC2 = .827, .835$ ) for the qualitative vignettes, assuaging concern that rater inconsistency could confound results.\

#### ***4.0 Analyses***

Prior to hypothesis testing, all scales were assessed for acceptable reliability. All scales that were included in analyses reported reliabilities of  $\alpha = .70$  or above; individual reliabilities are reported in the measures section. Scale composites were computed once reliability was determined, for use in analyses. Additionally, all variables were mean centered to limit any issues with multicollinearity.

Of the four measures of the dependent variable, two measures consisted of scales. However, only one of these scales has been previously used in a published study (Liu, 2008). The other measure consisted of a vignette with multiple-choice options describing different behaviors. These behaviors were coded to indicate how likely and individual was to share information based on their selection. Being that interrater reliability is not a useful metric in this case, it was necessary to assess if responses were consistent with the scale’s intended purpose. To investigate this pattern, an ANOVA was conducted where AchStriv, NAch, and Machivellianism were all treated as dependent variables and the

five responses were treated as fixed factors. Results demonstrate that there were mean differences across all three scales AchStriv ( $F = 2.84, p < .05$ ), NAch ( $F = 2.78, p < .05$ ), and Machiavellianism ( $F = 4.76, p < .05$ ). Inspection of mean trends revealed that higher levels of NAch and Machiavellianism were associated with those individuals choosing the response that was intended to capture an unwillingness to share information ( $M = 1.77, SE = .04$ ;  $M = 3.04, SE = .13$ , respectively). Moreover, lower mean were associated with those force choices aimed at capturing a willingness to share information for both Machiavellianism ( $M = 2.50, SE = .04$ ) and Nach ( $M = 1.63, SE = .01$ ) On the whole, this forced choice measure demonstrated a pattern of results consistent with that observed by the Liu (2008) scale – a non-trivial observation given the distinct nature and approach taken to in the development of the scales.

In the aggregate, analysis of response trends in the forced-choice scale was useful in providing some support for the construct validity of the willingness to share information Likert scale. Although it was used as an outcome variable in a study by Liu (2008), closer inspection of the items gave pause that this scale may be a measure of personality traits as opposed to behavior. The pattern of results for the measure, however, suggested that the Liu (2008) scale may be appropriate for use in the present study. Moreover, given the consistency in pattern between the scales, we chose to focus on the Liu (2008) measure as a primary outcome measure. This choice was based on the aforementioned consistency of findings and the desire to not unnecessarily inflate results using redundant measures as well as the challenges in interpreting and investigating interaction effects using forced-choice formats. The Likert scale developed by Liu (2008) scale, then, served as one of the three measures used to test study hypotheses.

The primary method of hypothesis testing employed by this study was moderated multiple regression. Interaction terms were computed for each of the independent variables, as well as a three-way interaction term. Main effects were entered into the first regression block, with each subsequent block adding one interaction term for ease in interpreting incremental changes in significance and variance explained. This procedure was conducted for each of the four measures of the dependent variable, with analysis results reported below.

## Chapter 3

### Results

Table 1 presents the relevant descriptive statistics and intercorrelations of the variables included in the current study. One notable correlation was found in the relationship between NAch and Machiavellianism ( $r = .458, p < .01$ ), indicating that those who score highly in NAch were also likely to be rated as highly Machiavellian. Conversely, a notably low correlation was found between the NAch and AchStriv measures ( $r = .062$ ). This provides some support for the assertion that these measures, although both assessing achievement motivation in some capacity, may be distinct constructs (Job, Langens, & Brandstatter, 2009). As is apparent when examining the table, the relationship between these measures is inconsistent. The vignette-based measures were correlated very weakly with each other (e.g.  $r = .092$  between the first and second vignette), a result that is troubling considering their similarity in form and construction. Additionally, all of the qualitative vignettes were found to have negative correlations with the previously validated willingness to share information scale, with vignette 1 and vignette 2 having significant negative relationships with the scale measure ( $r = -.222, p < .01$ ;  $r = -.183, p < .01$ ). These issues will be addressed in more detail during the discussion of results.

---

Insert Table 1 about here

---

Results of the final multiple regression procedure, using the Liu (2008) willingness to share information scale as the dependent variable, are reported in Table 2. Hypothesis 1 proposed that the relationship between NAch and information sharing would be more negative when high NAch was moderated by AchStriv. The results support this prediction ( $b = 1.85, p < .05$ ) and appear to show support for Hypothesis 1. However this relationship was only seen when using the Liu (2008) scale as the dependent measure; vignette 1 ( $b = 0.37, ns$ ) and vignette 2 ( $b = -.494, ns$ ) yielded non-significant results. Therefore, I can state that Hypothesis 1 was only partially supported.

---

Insert Table 2 about here

---

Hypothesis 2 expanded the claim of Hypothesis 1 insofar as the relationship between NAch and information sharing, moderated by AchStriv, would be most negative when AchStriv was high. Considering only the significant results found when using the Liu (2001) scale, a plot of the measured interaction can be seen in Figure 1. Based on the method prescribed by Aiken and West (1991), the plots represent NAch as moderated by up to two standard deviations above and below the mean of AchStriv. Although Aiken and West (1991) suggest plotting all interactions at -1sd and +1sd, creating additional plots for -2sd and +2sd allows the graph to illustrate any effects that may exist in the

more extreme ranges of the data. In the present dataset, there was reason to believe that plotting interactions when considering these additional deviations may provide a more interesting and enlightening picture of how AchStriv moderates NAch. Indeed, the separate interaction effects show that the highest (+2 standard deviations) levels of AchStriv are associated with the highest rates of information sharing when NAch is high, failing to support Hypothesis 2.

---

Insert Figure 1 about here

---

Considering the moderating effects of Machiavellianism, Hypothesis 3a predicted a relationship similar to Hypothesis 1, that the relationship between NAch and information sharing is moderated so that it is most negative when NAch is high. Referring to Table 2, the regression results demonstrate support for this predicted relationship ( $b = 1.52, p < .05$ ). However, as is the case with Hypothesis 1, support was only found when using the Liu (2008) scale as the sole measure of the dependent variable. Results when measuring information sharing via vignette 1 ( $b = 0.26, ns$ ) and vignette 2 ( $b = -0.16, ns$ ) are not readily interpretable, thus lending partial support for Hypothesis 3a.

A three-way interaction was predicted in Hypothesis 3b, as information sharing was predicted to be least likely when NAch, AchStriv, and Machiavellianism were all reported at high levels. Results from all measures of the criterion failed to provide

support for the presence of this interaction ( $b = -0.69, ns$ ;  $b = -1.658, ns$ ;  $b = 0.27, ns$ ). A graphic exploration of the interaction effects did not yield any additional information, thus failing to support Hypothesis 3b.

Of additional, although not predicted, interest is the main effect that was consistently found between Machiavellianism and measures of information sharing. Significant main effects were found for NACH ( $b = 1.13, p < .05$ ), AchStriv ( $b = 0.46, p < .05$ ), and Machiavellianism ( $b = -0.35, p < .05$ ) when using the willingness to share information scale as the criterion measure. It is worth noting that, in the case of NACH and AchStriv, the slope coefficients of the main effects are positive rather than the negative values that would be assumed based on this study's hypotheses. However, examination of the interaction plots in Figure 1 demonstrates the negative trend found when the interaction of these two variables was considered. The presence of significant main effects when using this previously validated measure was not surprising when considering the significant interaction effects reported above.

However, Machiavellianism was the only predictor variable found to have a statistically significant relationship with the qualitative measures as well. This effect was found for both vignette 1 ( $b = 0.33, p < .05$ ) and vignette 2 ( $b = 0.32, p < .05$ ). The positive relationship between Machiavellianism and these vignettes is what is most interesting, and potentially illuminating. Machiavellianism has been previously shown to have a negative relationship with measures of information sharing (e.g. Liu, 2008), a result that is supported by the present research when a validated scale of willingness to share information was employed. It is my opinion that this inconsistency with the

literature, as well as components of this study, lends more support to considering the qualitative measures in this research as potentially invalid.

## Chapter 4

### Discussion

Recently, Judge and Kammeyer-Mueller (2012) called for a more serious and critical examination of human ambition as an independent construct. This comes after decades of research supporting the contraction of ambition into a facet of general motivation. The present study attempted to answer this call by examining the interaction of several personality traits as a model for individual ambition. Despite several unsupported and partially supported hypotheses, I feel that several valuable contributions can be made as a result of this research.

First and foremost, this study has added to a body of literature that supports the consideration of achievement striving and need for achievement as separate and distinct constructs (e.g. Job et al., 2009). While both are measures of achievement motivation in some capacity, their low correlation ( $r = .062$ ) indicates that these measures likely share little of the same variance. As such, it is appropriate for future research to consider these constructs sufficiently distinct for use together in personality measurement, and any interaction effects between the variables to be interpretable. The relationship between these two constructs should be explored further in future research, in order to better understand the complex nature of individual achievement motivation.

The interaction results presented in Table 2 and Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate that AchStriv and Machiavellianism, regardless of their level, are associated with lower likelihood of information sharing in high NAch individuals. This indicates that more self-focused aspects of personality, when determining whether or not to share relevant

information with others, influence those who are intrinsically satisfied by accomplishments. The lowered likelihood of information sharing shows that, as was alluded to by Moon (2005) and others, the more self-centered aspects of motivation are dominant in those who value accomplishment when they feel that those accomplishments may be threatened in some way.

---

Insert Figure 2 about here

---

A surprising finding demonstrated in Figure 1 is that high AchStriv was associated with a less negative relationship (between NAch and information sharing) than low AchStriv. Those who scored two standard deviations below the mean for AchStriv had the lowest relationship between high NAch and information sharing, contrary to the predictions in Hypothesis 2. After further consideration of this effect, it is possible that unforeseen cognitive processes were responsible for these results. As is demonstrated by Figure 1, low NAch individuals are least likely to share information when they are also high in AchStriv; this effect is completely reversed in those with high NAch. It is possible that those who are motivated by accomplishment, and highly value difficult and self-focused goals, are also better at understanding how to best accomplish those goals. As such, these individuals see through their own ambitions and find the value that can be added by sharing relevant information with capable others; a dose of pragmatism added to a desire for personal gain. Those who are high in one or the other achievement

motivation construct, but not both, may remain blinded by their want for accomplishments and fail to see the value in information sharing. Thus, these individuals may better describe those who make mistakes based in their ambitions than was previously thought.

This finding adds to the organizational science and personality literatures by demonstrating that not all achievement motivation constructs are created equal. If both NACH and AchStriv were measuring the same personal tendencies and proclivities towards certain behaviors, one would expect the results to indicate a more uniform relationship with a behavioral outcome like information sharing. However, this is not the case. As was previously reported, statistically these measures are only correlated at  $r = .062$ . Examination of Figure 1 expands upon the assertion that AchStriv and NACH are distinct constructs by demonstrating that, although these traits have similar relationships to information sharing when considered independently, their interaction yields an outcome that is much different. The foundational premise of the current study is that the organizational research literature has inappropriately measured ambition by equating it with the need for achievement, leaving other achievement-oriented personality variables to be considered unimportant. Effects demonstrated in this study counter against that premise, despite a lack of support for the hypothesized model of true ambition. The nuances of these achievement motivation constructs that led to the results presented here are beyond the scope of the present research; however, findings in this study have bolstered the argument that NACH is not the only appropriate personality variable to consider when discussing ambition and the outcomes of ambitious behavior.

The present operationalization of ambition, as described as the moderated effect of high AchStriv on high NAch, was not supported. However, this study does provide evidence that commonly used measures of the achievement motive interact in an interesting and distinct manner. It is my contention that this study has made strides towards better understanding the uniqueness in human ambition, and hope that future research can illuminate the issue further.

### ***Study Limitations***

Considering the results, despite unsupported hypotheses, this study may be considered a useful endeavor. A number of demonstrated trends, including those that defied assumptions, provide an interesting look into the behavioral tendencies of those who are motivated by personal accomplishment. That being said, there are several limitations that must be addressed before any substantive conclusions can be drawn from the data.

As was described above, an overwhelming majority of the sample used in this study was female. A lack of male participants may have had some impact on the outcomes of this study, as there has been some support for gender differences in achievement motivation (e.g. Vollmer & Rigmor, 1974). However, more recent research has demonstrated that there are little to no discernable gender differences in achievement motivation (Mednick & Thomas, 1993), with some researchers criticizing the methodology of past work that has shown differences to exist (e.g. Hyde & Kling, 2001; Spence & Helmreich, 1983). In any case, the paucity of male participants leads to natural

questions about the generalizability of study results. A more balanced sample would be desired for any replications or follow-up studies.

A major limitation of this study was the ineffectiveness of the vignette measures. The vignettes themselves can be viewed in Appendix C. Although constructed in accordance with the standards for vignette design (Barter & Renold, 1999; Wason, Polansky, & Hyman, 2002) all three of the vignettes used in this study yielded non-significant results, in contrast to the results found when using a validated scale. Results across these measures were inconsistent and difficult to interpret, indicating unforeseen measurement issues. Being that interrater reliability of the coders was well above the accepted standards, one explanation is that the scenarios described in the vignettes were simply not salient enough to a student sample. The decisions and subsequent implications alluded to in the vignettes were intended to describe issues in the modern, adult workplace. This is an area in which most college-aged students likely have little real experience, thus not providing them the ability to place themselves in the appropriate context. Presenting these vignettes to an applied, experienced sample may have more saliency and yield more interpretable results.

Additionally, the coding schema of the vignettes themselves may be seen as a potential issue. Although ratings were consistent across coders, and fairly normal response distributions were seen in the vignettes, the design of these qualitative measures must be brought into question when discussing methodological issues. However, these vignettes were constructed using procedures prescribed in established literatures, which have had success using this method. Thus an additional explanation must be considered, that the theoretical reasoning and general hypotheses were incorrect in and of themselves.

If that is the case, then the qualitative measures cannot be thought to be responsible for a lack of predicted findings. Repeated studies using different vignettes and coding benchmarks may shed more light on this issue, and possibly deliver different results in the future.

Finally, the use of willingness to share information as a single dependent variable is a limiting factor. Although information sharing is an important organizational outcome, it is certainly not the only tendency that would have been relevant to measure in the present study. It is possible that the central thesis of the arguments presented by this research would have been supported had more dependent variables been considered in theorizing and analysis. Future studies may consider using the rationale outlined here and exploring the impact that this paper's concept of ambition has on other important organizational outcomes.

### ***Practical Implications***

The business world has often regarded ambition as a virtue, allowing those who strive for great things and meet difficult challenges to be rewarded with promotions, power, and compensation. The pragmatic view of ambition would indicate that this response is always appropriate, provided that the focus of one's ambition has the potential for positive organizational outcomes in the here and now. Indeed, history would suggest that few pay heed to the goals or methods of ambitious action while the outcomes are profitable. When things go badly, however, the populous is quick to decry these same individuals with claims of over-reaching, recklessness, and greed.

The importance of the present research was to uncover the proverbial writing on the wall with regard to misused ambition. Grijalva and Harms (2013) examined the relationship between narcissistic, self-focused behavior and counterproductive work behaviors (CWB). The authors noted that organizations must make a concerted effort to prevent these individuals from performing CWB and damaging the organization's integrity and performance outcomes via their personally centered actions. This study did demonstrate that motivation for personal accomplishment is associated with decreased rates of an important pro-social and pro-organizational behavior. Future research can expand upon this finding and examine just how far ambitious individuals are willing to go for the sake of achievement, potentially damaging coworkers and the organizational environment around them.

The present research examined the effect of ambition on the important exchange of information between members of a modern organization (e.g. Li & Lin, 2006; Li, Rao, Ragu-Nathan, & Ragu-Nathan, 2005; Mesmer-Magnus & DeChurch, 2009; Morishima, 1991), in the hope of highlighting the potentially unseen dangers inherent in this process. By understanding where ambitious individuals may falter and why, organizations can better prepare and implement preventative safeguards. A more complete knowledge of the ambitious personality is necessary for ensuring that the appropriate checks and balances are placed on those who meet the description, creating an environment where the ambitious are not afforded the opportunity to exploit others or their organization to achieve personal ends.

### ***Future Research Directions***

A fundamental goal of this study is to open the literature to a new conceptualization of ambition and incite a resurgence of research regarding the construct. Although the proposed model was shown to be flawed, adjustment and the inclusion of other moderating variables may bring about considerations of ambition as a trait that is distinct from but related to goal-setting and general achievement behaviors, providing context for examining a plethora of interesting phenomena both inside and outside of organizations. By distinguishing ambition from other constructs, we can begin to illustrate the impact that it has on our lifestyles, decision making, and personal relationships.

A rewarding area of research concerns the progress of ambition throughout the lifespan. Judge and Kammeyer-Mueller (2012) examined life-long ambition and its career outcomes via the Terman Life-Cycle study, and determined that ambition is a mid-level trait that remains stable over time. The authors observed the attainment of prestigious and high-paying jobs as indicative of ambitious successes throughout the lifetime. However, unconsidered is the possibility that ambition is trait that encounters periods of situational dormancy; that is, an individual may attain a desired position or status at a point in their lives, become complacent, and not engage in ambitious pursuits for a period of time until the trait is re-activated by new situational factors (Tett & Gutterman, 2000). Both empirical and qualitative research may grant the literature a more detailed image of the longitudinal progression in human ambition.

Additionally, despite the fact that misused ambition is the focus of this research, the present study does not propose that ambition is a perpetually negative trait. To the

contrary, positive objectives such as sustained employment and lifetime financial success have been suggested as the results of ambition that is well directed (e.g. Kanfer, Wanberg, & Krantowitz, 2001; Nickerson, Schwarz, & Diener, 2007; Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012). A productive area of future research lies in further examination of the positive personal and organizational impact that can arise from ambition. Although the ultimate focus of ambitious endeavors is to benefit the individual, there are a host of positive and pro-social outcomes that can result from those pursuits. For instance, ambitious individuals may be likely to be seen as charismatic and influential towards followers, a leadership style that has been demonstrated to impact employee engagement, satisfaction, and productivity (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996; Babcock-Roberson & Strickland, 2010). The productive aspects of ambition are as important for scientific study as the destructive, and may present researchers with a new lens through which to view leader-follower relationships.

*Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations of Included Variables*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Achievement Striving	39.983	.624	---						
Need for Achievement	1.558	.113	.062	---					
Machiavellianism	2.562	.556	-.111	.458**	---				
Will to Share Information	5.209	.800	.353**	.043	-.213**	---			
Vignette One	2.323	.633	-.072	.059	-.250**	-.222**	---		
Vignette Two	2.443	.793	-.128*	.045	.216**	-.094	.092	---	
Vignette Three	2.01	1.339	-.098	.199	.226**	-.183**	.077	.090	---

*Note.*  $n = 257$  \*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Table 2. Regression Analyses Testing the Moderation Effects*

Variable	Willingness to Share Information (b)				
	Step 1	Step2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
Step 1					
AchStriv	.407*	.432*	.435*	.437*	.459*
NAch	.928*	1.195*	1.225*	1.182*	1.125*
Mach	-.343*	-.367*	-.355*	-.355*	-.349*
Step 2					
NAch X AchStriv		1.973*	2.203*	1.880*	1.856*
Step 3					
NAch X Mach			1.630*	1.577*	1.515*
Step 4					
Mach X AchStriv				.131	.128
Step 5					
Threeway					-.687
$R^2$	.169	.201	.221	.223	.224
$F$	17.28**	15.93**	14.37**	12.10**	10.37**
$\Delta R^2$		.032**	.021**	.002	.001

*Note.*  $n = 257$ . AchStriv = Achievement Striving; NAch = Need for Achievement. Mach = Machiavellianism. Threeway = Threeway Interaction. Dependent Variable = Willingness to Share Information.  
 \*  $p \leq .05$ .      \*\*  $p \leq .01$ .

Figure 1. Interaction Results of Need for Achievement Moderated by Achievement Striving

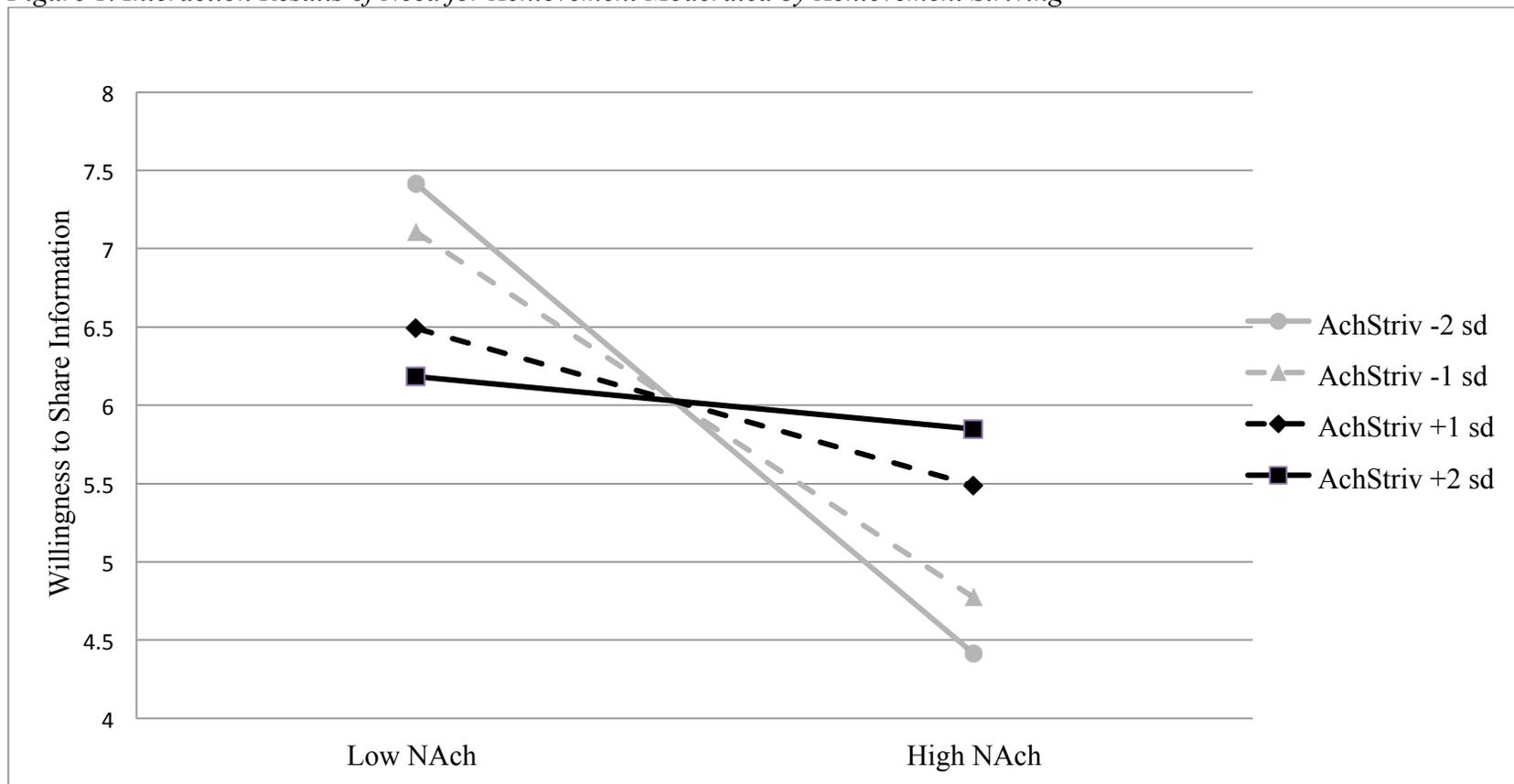
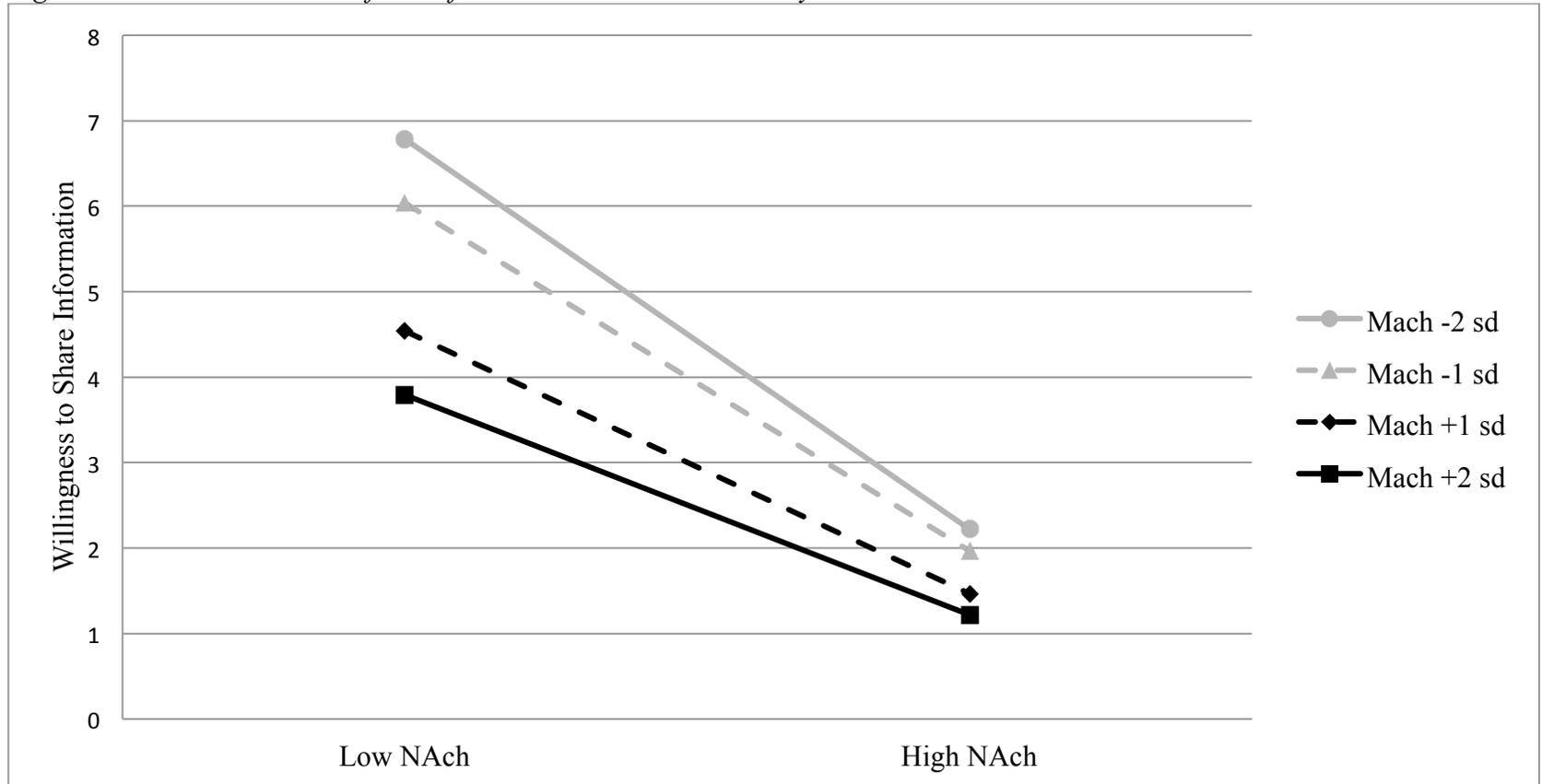


Figure 2. Interaction Results of Need for Achievement Moderated by Machiavellianism



## References

- Aiken, L.S., & West, S.G. (1991). *Multiple Regression: Testing and Interpreting Interactions*. Newbury Park, London, Sage.
- Ambition. (n.d.). In *Merriam-Webster Online*, Retrieved March 13, 2013, from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ambition>.
- Andrews, K. (1971). *The Concept of Corporate Strategy*. Illinois: Dow Jones-Irwin, Inc.
- Babcock-Roberson, M.E., & Strickland, O.J. (2010). The relationship between charismatic leadership, work engagement, and organizational citizenship behaviors. *The Journal of Psychology, 144*(3), 313-326.
- Barter, C., & Renold, E. (1999). The Use of Vignettes in Qualitative Research. *Social Research Update, 25*, <http://www.soc.surrey.ac.uk/sru/SRU25.html>.
- Christie, R., & Geis, F. (eds.). (1970). *Studies in Machiavellianism*. New York: Academic Press.
- Chonko, L. B. (1982). Machiavellianism: Sex differences in the profession of purchasing management. *Psychological Reports, 51*, 645-646
- Costa, P. T., & McCrae, R. R. (1992). *Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PIR): Professional manual*. Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources.
- Cropanzano, R., & Mitchell, M.S. (2005). Social Exchange Theory: An Interdisciplinary Review. *Journal of Management, 31*, 874-899.

- Davenport, T.H., & Prusak, L. (2000). *Work knowledge: How organizations manage what they know*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Dahling, J.J., Whitaker, B.G., & Levey, P.E. (2009). The development and validation of a new Machiavellianism scale. *Journal of Management*, 35(2), 947-962.
- Dahling, J.J., Kuyumcu, D., & Librizzi, E.H. (2012). Machiavellianism, unethical behavior, and well-being in organizational life. In R.A. Giacalone & M.D. Promislo (Eds.) *Handbook of unethical work behavior: Implications for individual well-being* (pp.183-194). Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc.
- DesRochers, S., & Dahir, V. (2000). Ambition as a motivational basis of organizational and professional commitment: Preliminary analysis of a proposed career advancement ambition scale. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 91, 563-570.
- Duckworth, A.L., Peterson, C., Matthews, M.D., & Kelly, D.R. (2007). Grit: Perseverance and passion for long-term goals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92(6), 1087-1101.
- Elchardus, M., & Smits, W. (2008). The vanishing flexible: Ambition, self-realization and flexibility in the career perspectives of young Belgian adults. *Work, Employment and Society*, 22, 243-262.
- Farmer, S.M., & Van Dyne, L. (2010). The idealized self and the situated self as predictors of employee work behaviors. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 95(3), 503-516.
- Fleishman, E.A., Mumford, M.D., Zaccaro, S.J., Levin, K.Y., Korotkin, A.L., & Hein, M.B. (1991). Taxonomic efforts in the description of leader behavior: A synthesis and functional interpretation. *Leadership Quarterly*, 2(4), 245-287.

- Furnham, A., Hyde, G., & Trickey, G. (2014). The dark side of career preference: dark side traits, motives, and values. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 42* (2), 106-114.
- Gillath, O., Sesko, A.K., Shaver, P.R., & Chun, D.S. (2010). Attachment, authenticity, and honesty: Dispositional and experimentally induced security can reduce self- and other-deception. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 98*(5), 841-855.
- Grijalva, E., & Harms, P. (2013). Narcissism: An integrative synthesis and dominance complementarity model. *Academy of Management Perspectives*. Advance online publication. doi:10.5465/amp.2012.0048
- Gunnthorsdottir, A., McCabe, K., & Smith, V. (2002). Using the Machiavellianism instrument to predict trustworthiness in a bargaining game. *Journal of Economic Psychology, 23*, 49-66.
- Gulliksen, H. (1950). *Theory of Mental Tests*. New Jersey: Wiley.
- Hansson, R.O., Hogan, R., Johnson, J.A., & Schroeder, D.J. (1983). Disentangling Type A behavior: The roles of ambition, insensitivity, and anxiety. *Journal of Labor Economics, 2*, 353-370.
- Hibbing, J.R. (1986). Ambition in the house: Behavioral consequences of higher office goals among U.S. representatives. *American Journal of Political Science, 30*(3), 651-665.
- Hodgins, H.S., Yacko, H.A., & Gottlieb, E. (2006). Autonomy and nondefensiveness. *Motivation and Emotions, 30*, 283-293.

- Hough, L.M. (1992). The “Big Five” personality variables – construct confusion: Description versus prediction. *Human Performance*, 5, 139-155.
- Hunter, S.T., Tate, B.W., Dzieweczynski, J.L., & Bedell-Avers, K.E. (2011). Leaders make mistakes: A multilevel consideration of why. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 22(2), 239-258.
- Hyde, J.S., & Kling, K.C. (2001). Women, Motivation, and Achievement. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 25, 364-378.
- Job, V., Langens, T.A., & Brandstatter, V. (2009). Effects of achievement goal striving on well-being: The moderating role of explicit achievement motive. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 35(8), 983-996.
- Judge, T.A., & Kammeyer-Mueller, J.D. (2012). On the value of aiming high: The causes and consequences of ambition. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 97(4), 758-775.
- Kanfer, R., Wanberg, C.R., & Krantowitz, T.M. (2001). Job search and employment: A personality-motivational analysis and meta-analytic review. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86, 837-855.
- Keller, R.T. (2001). Cross-functional project groups in research and new product development: Diversity, communications, job stress, and outcomes. *Academy of Management Journal*, 44(3), 547-555.
- Kirkpatrick, S.A., & Locke, E.A. (1996). Direct and indirect effects of three core charismatic leadership components on performance and attitudes. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 81(1), 36-51.

- Klein, H.J., & Wright, P.M. (1994). Antecedents of goal commitment: An empirical examination of personal and situational factors. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 24*, 95-114.
- Kraus, M.W., Chen, S. (2009). Striving to be known by significant others: Automatic activation of self-verification goals in relationship contexts. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 97*(1), 58-73.
- Li, S., & Lin, B. (2006). Accessing information sharing and information quality in supply chain management. *Decision Support Systems, 42*(3), 1641-1656.
- Li, S., Rao, S.S., Ragu-Nathan, T.S., & Ragu-Nathan, B. (2005). Development and validation of a measurement instrument for studying supply chain management practices. *Journal of Operations Management, 23*(6), 618-641.
- Liu, C.C. (2008). The relationship between Machiavellianism and knowledge-sharing willingness. *Journal of Business Psychology, 22*, 233-240.
- Locke, E.A. (1996). Motivation through conscious goal setting. *Applied and Preventive Psychology, 5*, 117-124.
- Locke, E.A. & Latham, G.P. (2002). Building a practically useful theory of goal setting and task motivation: A 35-year odyssey. *American Psychologist, 57*, 705-717.
- McHoskey, J.W. 1999. Machiavellianism, intrinsic versus extrinsic goals and social interest: A self-determination theory analysis. *Motivation and Emotion, 23*, 267–283.
- McLean, B., & Elkind P. (2004). *The Smartest Guys in the Room: The Amazing Rise and Scandalous Fall of Enron*. New York: Penguin.

- Mednick, M.T., & Thomas, V.G. (1993). Women and the psychology of achievement: A view from the eighties. In F.L. Denmark & M.A. Paludi (Eds.), *Psychology of women: A handbook of issues and theories* (pp. 585-626). Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Meeker, B.F. (1971). Decisions and exchange. *American Sociological Review*, 36, 485-495.
- Meserve, S.A., Pemstein, D., Bernhard, W.T. (2009). Political ambition and legislative behavior in the European parliament. *The Journal of Politics*, 71(3), 1-18.
- Mesmer-Magnus, J.R., & DeChurch, L.A. (2009). Information sharing and team performance: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 94(2), 535-546.
- Moon, H. (2001). The two faces of conscientiousness: Duty and achievement striving in escalation of commitment dilemmas. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86(3), 533-540.
- Morishima, M. (1991). Information sharing and firm performance in Japan. *Industrial Relations: A Journal of Economy and Society*, 30(1), 37-61.
- Mount, M.K., & Barrick, M.R. (1995). The Big Five personality dimensions: Implications for research and practice in human resource management. *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management*, 13, 153-200.
- Nagler, U. K., Reiter, K. J., Furtner, M. R., & Rauthmann, J. F. (2014). Is there a “dark intelligence”? Emotional intelligence is used by dark personalities to emotionally manipulate others. *Personality and Individual Differences*.

- Nickerson, C., Schwarz, N., & Diener, E. (2007). Financial aspirations, financial success, and overall life satisfaction: Who? And how? *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 8, 467-515.
- O'Boyle, E.H., Forsyth, D.R., & Banks, G.C. (2012). A meta-analysis of the Dark Triad and work behavior: A social exchange perspective. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 97(3), 557-579.
- Olson, E.M., Walker, O.C., & Ruekert, R.W. (1995). Organizing for effective new product development: The moderating role of product innovativeness. *Journal of Marketing*, 59(1), 48-62.
- Paulhus, D.L., and Williams, K.M. 2002. The dark triad of personality: Narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 36, 556–563.
- Pettigrove, G. (2007). Ambitions. *Ethic Theory and Moral Practice*, 10, 53-68.
- Ryan, R.M., & Deci, E.L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55, 68-78.
- Skinner, N. F., Giokas, J. A., & Hornstein, H. A. (1976). Personality correlates of Machiavellianism: I. Consensual validation. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 4, 273-276.
- Spence, J.T., & Helmreich, R.L. (1983). Achievement-related motives and behaviors. In J.T. Spence (Ed.), *Achievement and achievement motives: Psychological and sociological approaches* (pp. 7-74). San Francisco: Freeman.
- Steininger, M., & Eisenberg, E. (1976). On different relationships between dogmatism

- and Machiavellianism among male and female college students. *Psychological Reports*, 38, 779-782.
- Stone, O. (Director). (1987). *Wall Street* [Motion Picture]. United States: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox.
- Tett, R. P., & Gutterman, H. A. (2000). Situation trait relevance, trait expression, and cross-situational consistency: Testing a principle of trait activation. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 34, 397-423.
- Tubbs, M.E. (1993). Commitment as a moderator of the goal-performance relation: A case for clearer construct definition. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 78, 86-97.
- Tubbs, M.E., Boehne, D.M., & Dahl, J.G. (1993). Expectancy, valence, and motivational force functions in goal-setting research: An empirical test. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 78, 361-373.
- Tucker, S., Turner, N., Barling, J., Reid, E.M., & Elving, C. (2006). Apologies and transformational leadership. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 63(2), 195-207.
- Turban, D.B., & Keon, T.L. (1993). Organizational attractiveness: An interactionist perspective. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 78(2), 184-193.
- Turner, R.H. (1964). Some aspects of women's ambition. *American Journal of Sociology*, 70, 271-285.
- Wason, K.D., Polonsky, M.J., & Hyman, M.R. (2002). Designing vignette studies in marketing. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 10, 41-58.
- Wertheim, E. G., Widom, C. S., & Wortzel, L. H. (1978). Multivariate analysis of male and female professional choice correlates. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 63, 234-242.

- Yu, Z., Yan, H., & Cheng, T. E. (2001). Benefits of information sharing with supply chain partnerships. *Industrial Management & Data Systems, 101*(3), 114-121.
- Van Vianen, A.E.M. (1999). Managerial self-efficacy, outcome expectancies, and work-role salience as determinants of ambition for a managerial position. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 29*, 639-665.
- Vollmer, F., & Rigmor, A. (1974). Sex differences in achievement motivation. *The Scandanavian Journal of Psychology, 15I*(1), 310-313.
- Vroom, V.H. (1964). *Work and motivation*. New York: Wiley.
- Ziegler, M., Schmidt-Atzert, L., Buhner, M., & Krumm, S. (2007). Fakability of different measurement methods for achievement motivation: questionnaire, semi-projective, and objective. *Psychology Science, 49*(4), 291-307.

## Appendix A

### Covariates

#### Demographic

Age

Gender

Ethnicity

#### Big Five Inventory (Pervin & John, 2001)

Here are a number of characteristics that may or may not apply to you. For example, do you agree that you are someone who likes to spend time with others? Please write a number next to each statement to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with that statement.

Strongly Disagree                  Disagree                  Neutral Agreement                  Agree                  Strongly Agree  
 1-----2-----3-----4-----5

I See Myself as Someone Who...

1. Is talkative
2. Tends to find fault with others
3. Does a thorough job
4. Is depressed, blue
5. Is original, comes up with new ideas
6. Is reserved
7. Is helpful and unselfish with others
8. Can be somewhat careless
9. Is relaxed, handles stress well
10. Is curious about many different things
11. Is full of energy
12. Starts quarrels with others
13. Is a reliable worker
14. Can be tense
15. Is ingenious, a deep thinker
16. Generates a lot of enthusiasm
17. Has a forgiving nature
18. Tends to be disorganized
19. Worries a lot
20. Has an active imagination
21. Tends to be quiet
22. Is generally trusting

23. Tends to be lazy
24. Is emotionally stable, not easily upset
25. Is inventive
26. Has an assertive personality
27. Can be cold and aloof
28. Preserves until the task is finished
29. Can be moody
30. Values artistic, aesthetic experiences
31. Is sometimes shy, inhibited
32. Is considerate and kind to almost everyone
33. Does things efficiently
34. Remains calm in tense situations
35. Prefers work that is routine
36. Is outgoing, sociable
37. Is sometimes rude to others
38. Makes plans and follows through with them
39. Gets nervous easily
40. Likes to reflect, play with ideas
41. Has few artistic interests
42. Likes to cooperate with others
43. Is easily distracted
44. Is sophisticated in art, music, or literature

## Appendix B

### Dependent Measures

Indicate the degree to which you agree with each statement by using the following scale:

Strongly Disagree                  Disagree                  Neutral Agreement                  Agree                  Strongly Agree

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

#### Willingness to Share Information (Liu, 2008)

1. I completely understand the professional knowledge of my colleagues.
2. Colleagues in the same department fully understand my work.
3. I completely understand how my colleagues finish their work.
4. I think my colleagues do well at knowledge sharing.
5. I am glad to answer work-related questions and share my knowledge with others.
6. I like to demonstrate difficult concepts for my colleagues.
7. I do my best to record my knowledge with documents and reports.
8. When I can not help my colleagues solve a problem, I will seek other methods.
9. I am happy to share my ideas or listen to others' opinions.
10. Sharing knowledge supports the company's strategic goals.
11. We continually search for new knowledge to create opportunities for the company's competitive advantage.
12. We are glad to share skills and knowledge with both suppliers and customers.

Strongly Disagree                  Disagree                  Neutral Agreement                  Agree                  Strongly Agree

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

#### Machiavellianism (Dahling, Whitaker, & Levy, 2009)

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.

Achievement Striving (adapted from Costa & McCrae, 1992; NEO-PI-R)

1. I go straight for the goal.
2. I work hard.
3. I turn plans into actions.
4. I plunge into tasks with all my heart.
5. I do more than what's expected of me.
6. I set high standards for my self and others.
7. I demand quality.
8. I am not highly motivated to succeed.
9. I do just enough work to get by.
10. I put little time and effort into my work.

Please respond "yes" or "no" after reading each of the following items.

Need for Achievement (Cassidy & Lynn, 1989)

1. Hard work is something I like to avoid.
2. I can easily sit around for a long time doing nothing.
3. I must admit I often do as little work as I can get away with.
4. I am basically a lazy person.
5. I often put off until tomorrow things I know I should do today.
6. I easily get bored if I don't have something to do.

7. I like to work hard.
8. If there is an opportunity to earn money, I am usually there.
9. I would be willing to work for a salary that was below average if the job was pleasant.
10. The kind of work I like is the one that pays top salary for top performance.
11. As long as I am paid for my work, I don't mind working while others are having fun.
12. I frequently think about what I might do to earn a great deal of money.
13. It is important to me to make lots of money.
14. The most important thing about a job is the pay.
15. I think I would enjoy having authority over other people.
16. If given the chance I would make a good leader of people.
17. I think I am usually a leader in my group.
18. I enjoy planning things and deciding what other people should do.
19. I like to give orders and get things going.
20. People take notice of what I say.
21. When a group I belong to plans an activity I would rather direct it myself than just help out and have someone else organize it.
22. I hate to see bad workmanship.
23. Part of the satisfaction in doing something comes from seeing how good the finished product looks.
24. It is no use playing a game when you are playing with someone as good as yourself.
25. I get a sense of satisfaction out of being able to say I have done a very good job on a project.
26. I find satisfaction in working as well as I can.
27. I find satisfaction in exceeding my previous performance even if I don't outperform others.
28. There is satisfaction in a job well done.
29. I try harder when I'm in competition with other people.
30. It annoys me when other people perform better than I do.
31. I judge my performance on whether I do better than others rather than on just getting a good result.
32. If I get a good result, it doesn't matter if others do better.
33. I would never allow others to get the credit for what I have done.
34. To be a real success I feel I have to do better than everyone I come up against.
35. It is important to me to perform better than others on a task.
36. I would like an important job where people looked up to me.
37. I like talking to people who are important.
38. I want to be an important person in the community.
39. I really admire people who have fought their way to the top.
40. If I had enough money I would not work.
41. Even if I won a great deal of money on the pools I would still prefer to work.
42. I like to be admired for my achievements.
43. I dislike being the center of attention.

44. I like to have people come to me for advice.
45. I find satisfaction in having influence over others because of my position in the community.
46. I would rather do some thing at which I feel confident and relaxed than something which is challenging and difficult.
47. I would rather learn easy fun games than difficult thought games.
48. If I'm not good at something I would rather keep struggling to master it than move on to something I may be good at.
49. I prefer to work in situations that require a high level of skill.
50. I more often attempt tasks that I am not sure I can do than tasks I know how to do.
51. I like to be busy all the time.
52. I feel like giving up quickly when things go wrong.

## **Appendix C**

### **Vignette Measures**

#### **Qualitative Vignette 1**

You are a manager in a large, consulting based company. This position is one that has great opportunity for advancement to positions of higher status and pay, but promotions are primarily based on your ability to successfully complete difficult projects. To be successful, many projects require the input of several different experts. However, the more individuals you involve in the project, the more likely it is that they will want credit for their participation. This may result in your superiors viewing you as less responsible for the project's success, and less qualified for promotion.

A major client has requested that you advise them on how to market a line of energy drinks. This client has invested millions of dollars into this product, and believes it will revolutionize the entire industry. Due to the size and scope of the project, it is known that you will be quickly promoted if you are responsible for its success. However, your knowledge of this market is limited and presents a chance that you will make the wrong decision if you base it on your knowledge alone. A colleague who is an expert in this field is available to help you. However, he will expect to receive ample credit for his participation if the project is successful. While this will increase your chances of making the correct decision, it also will make your promotion less likely.

You have a meeting the next day to discuss how you will approach this project. What would you choose to do? Describe your general approach to the project given the scenario described.

#### **Qualitative Vignette 2**

You are an entry-level employee in a large, prestigious consulting firm. Competition in this industry is fierce, and peers often compete for projects, promotions, and raises. Individuals who are seen as poor performers are often quickly fired, while high performers are rewarded with both praise and financial incentives. You have been hired based on your background in engineering, which the firm has deemed as highly valuable. Your peers have expertise in different areas than you, making each of you valuable to the company for different reasons.

One of your peers has been assigned to consult with a large automobile company on the production and distribution of a new engine. The company wants to ensure that their engine is safe, reliable, and something customers would be interested in having in their cars. While your peer is highly skilled in marketing, and is an expert in customer relations, you realize that he most likely does not have the engineering background that is necessary for assessing the quality of the engine itself. This may make him more likely to fail on this project. Your own background in engineering would make you the expert on this topic, but your co-worker has not requested your assistance.

Please describe what you would do in this scenario, and why.

### **Qualitative Vignette 3 with Multiple Choice Options**

You are an entry-level stock trader at a multinational firm. Your job is to use your client's money to buy or sell stock in gas companies based on the advice and strategy of your firm's senior management, as well as your own intuition and knowledge. This business is extremely rewarding to those who are successful (rapid promotions, extremely high salaries and bonuses) but terrible to those who don't cooperate with company policies. The business and those involved in it are highly competitive, driven, and focused solely on creating as much profit as possible.

A memo has come down from management that, in order to maximize competitive advantage, all traders should estimate how much money they will make on any given transaction before they actually make it. Employees should then report these profits and worry about the results of the actual sale later. This makes your company look more profitable to investors than it actually might be; the legality of which, you realize, is highly questionable.

From the following scenarios, choose which best describes how you would act in this situation:

- 1) You think it's possible that management has not realized the potential problem they are causing. You decide to bring the issue of legality to your boss in the hopes of saving the company, and yourself, considerable legal trouble in the future.

- 2) You think that the company is trying to defraud investors by reporting profits they have not yet recorded. You refuse to comply and contemplate reporting the firm to the Securities and Exchange Commission.
- 3) You understand the legal issues that can come as a result of participating, but do not see anyone else complaining or having doubts. You decide to follow the crowd and hope that everything works out in the end.
- 4) You think that this may be an opportunity to really impress management by setting high expectations for profits and then exceeding them on your own. You decide that this will all work out and benefit your career in the process.
- 5) You think this is a golden opportunity to make waves and move up in the company. You don't want to be outdone by your peers so you decide to buy in completely and take advantage of this aggressive and controversial strategy. Whether or not this is legal is not your concern; management will get in trouble, not you.