THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVE AND DOWNWARD

COMMUNICATIVE ADAPTABILITY

By

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A Master's Project Submitted to Fulfillment one of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in

Professional Communication

University of Alaska Fairbanks

May 2019

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Thank you to Dr. Kevin L. Sager

Abstract

In this paper, a model was created linking the Achievement Motive to Downward

Communicative Adaptability. As theorized in the model, there is a significant positive

relationship between the Achievement Motive and Downward Communicative Adaptability.

Participants who supervise or manage others completed an in-person paper and pencil survey.

The collected data were entered into an SPSS data file, and a simple correlational analysis was

run. A significant positive correlation was found between the Achievement Motive and

Downward Communicative Adaptability.

Keywords: Motive, Achievement Motive, Downward Communicative Adaptability.

Table of Contents

Introduction

The present paper investigated whether a relationship exists between the Achievement Motive (McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, & Lowell, 1953) and Downward Communicative Adaptability (Sager and Wallce, 2012b). The Achievement Motive is the independent variable and Downward Communicative Adaptability is the dependent variable. According to my proposed model, there is a positive relationship between the Achievement Motive and Downward Communicative Adaptability.

Literature Review

Traits and Motives

Personality traits and motives can be distinguished. We will review the fundamental difference before proceeding with the literature on motives. Motives determine what an individual desires (Winter, Stewart, Klohnen, & Duncan, 1998). In contrast, traits are defined as how an individual tends to behave (Winter et al., 1998). Winter et al. (1998) argue that "traits and motives interact in important ways and that traits channel the ways in which motives are expressed in behavior and life outcomes" (p. 243).

In the present paper, a motive is defined as an individual's desire to engage in a particular behavior (McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, and Lowell, 1953; McClelland, 1987). Motives are influenced by feelings associated with contextual cues (McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, and Lowell, 1953; McClelland, 1987). McClelland (1987) explained that motives "drive or energize, orient, and select behavior" (p. 213). McClelland et al. (1953) added that through social experiences, we develop our motives.

Historically, McClelland (1961, 1965, 1987; McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, & Lowell, 1953; McClelland Koestner, & Weinberger, 1989) took interest in a few motives: The Achievement Motive, the Power Motive, and the Affiliation Motive. The Achievement Motive is defined as desiring to accomplish goals, and fulfill responsibilities (McClelland Koestner, & Weinberger, 1989; Yamaguchi, 2003). The Power Motive is defined as wanting to direct others so one can actualize a desired outcome (McClelland, 1987). Lastly, the Affiliation Motive is defined as wanting to create and sustain connections with others (Atkinson, Heynes & Veroff, 1954; Boyatzis, 1973; McClelland Koestner, & Weinberger 1989). These motives will be discussed in the present paper

Atkinson and McClelland (1948) demonstrated how to measure motives. Specifically, Atkinson and McClelland developed the "need for food" (McClelland, 1987, p.187) score to measure the Hunger Motive. This score was determined by counting food-related concepts in stories written by participants after they viewed pictures in a projective test (i.e., the Thematic Apperception Test (or TAT); Murray, 1943). By determining a participant's need for food score, it allowed Atkinson and McClelland (1948) to determine the strength of a participant's Hunger Motive.

Similarly, McClelland (1961) measured the Achievement Motive by using the TAT. Participants' Achievement Motive was not aroused before taking the test. McClelland (1961) argued that the participants with a high need to Achieve would write in their stories "achievement-related ideas of the same kind as those elicited in everyone under achievement 'pressure'" (p.43). McClelland (1961) explained that such participants "would appear to be someone with a 'bias', a 'concern', or a 'need' for achievement" (p.43).

Lastly, McClelland (1961) argued that:

> it was decided that a simple count of the number of such achievement related-ideas in stories written under normal [neutral] conditions could be taken to represent the strength of a… [person's] concern with achievement. The count has been called the score for *n* Achievement (abbreviation for 'need for Achievement') (p. 43).

McClelland (1961) explained that this method could be applied to any motive and referenced Atkinson's (1958) work, who applied the same method to both the Power and Affiliation Motives. So, McClelland (1987) argued that "the strength of the achievement motive in individuals is best measured by the *n* Achievement score derived from coding the thought content of imaginative stories" (p. 224). McClelland used *n* achievement as an indicator of motive strength. He defined motive strength as having a "high" or "low" *n* score (p. 213). Motive strength can be understood as the intensity of an individual's motive, which is determined by the individual's *n* score (McClelland, 1961).

According to McClelland (1961), *n* refers to "a simple count of the number… [of motive-related] ideas in stories written under normal testing conditions" (p. 42) pertaining to a particular motive. Moreover, *n* is an abbreviation for "need for" (p. 43), which typically comes before any stated motive. Here, *n* is defined as "need for". The letter *n* also comes before each motive. Also, *n* can be thought of as the count of motive-related concepts in a story (i.e., how often a theme emerges in a story.). Moreover, *n* indicates motive strength score. McClelland (1987) argued that "the strength of the achievement motive in individuals is best measured by the *n* Achievement score derived from coding the thought content of imaginative stories" (p. 224).

3

Administering the TAT

Let us revisit the TAT. I will next explain how McClelland, Clark, Roby, and Atkinson (1949) administered the TAT. McClelland et al. (1949) first read instructions aloud to participants concerning the pictures they were about to be shown. McClelland et al. (1949) explained to participants that they would be shown a picture for a brief amount of time, and that the participants would be provided a short amount of time to write a story about what they had seen in the picture.

Additionally, prior to administering the TAT to participants, McClelland et al. (1949) would expose participants to different conditions, which were designed to arouse certain motives. To measure the strength of the Achievement Motive, McClelland et al. (1949) would first expose participants to neutral conditions (i.e., the Achievement Motive was not aroused), and then show pictures to participants. McClelland et al. (1949) would then instruct the participants to write brief stories about what they saw in the pictures. They would then count the number of achievement-related concepts in the stories to determine participants' Achievement Motive strength.

The present paper now includes an understanding of how research teams administer the TAT. Moreover, the present paper now includes an understanding of multiple types of conditions in experiments, and of the supposed appropriateness of how to apply the conditions. The focus of the present paper will return to the motives. The Achievement Motive can be fulfilled when an individual completes their goals, and earns rewards (Yamaguchi, 2003). Yamaguchi described individuals with a strong Affiliation Motive as yearning to interact with others. He added that these individuals enjoy situations where teamwork is emphasized. Moreover, Yamaguchi said

4

they "prefer to have trust relationships with others" (p. 328). Yamaguchi explained that

individuals with a strong Power Motive desire to impact others. He added that, "Power is an

ability that inclines people to carry out what they would [normally] not do without it" (p. 328).

Also, Yamaguchi expressed that individuals with a strong Power Motive want power because it

distinguishes them from others, and it allows them to be self-reliant.

Table 1.1

Term	*Definition*	*Author Definition*
Trait	Winter, Stewart, Klohnen, and Duncan (1998) defined traits as "how a person acts" (p. 237).	Traits are defined as how an individual tends to behave (Winter, Stewart, Klohnen, & Duncan, 1998).
Motive	Winter, Stewart, Klohnen, and Duncan (1998) defined motives as "what a person wants and in the process plans, anticipates, and enjoys…" (p. 237). According to McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, and Lowell (1953), "a motive is the learned result of pairing cues with affect or the conditions which produced affect" (p. 75). McClelland et al. (1953) added that "all motives are learned" through social experiences (p. 28). Moreover, McClelland (1987) referred to "behaviorist tradition" and explained that motives "drive or energize, orient, and select behavior" (p. 213).	In the present paper, a motive is defined as an individual's desire to engage in a particular behavior (McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, and Lowell, 1953; McClelland, 1987). Motives are influenced by feelings associated with contextual cues (McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, and Lowell, 1953; McClelland, 1987).
n (Achievement, Power, and Affiliation)	According to McClelland (1961), *n* refers to "a simple count of the number… ideas in stories written under normal testing conditions" (p. 42)	In this present paper, *n* is defined as "need for". *n* also comes before each of the three motives described earlier (Achievement, Power, and

5

	pertaining to a particular motive. Moreover, n refers to abbreviation of "need for" (p. 43)	Affiliation). Also, n can be thought of as the count of motive-related concepts in a story (i.e., how often a theme emerges in a story.). Moreover, n indicates motive strength score.
Motive Strength	According to McClelland (1987), motive strength varies from high "high" or "low" (p. 213).	Simply put, motive strength is the intensity of an individual's motive, which is determined by the individual's n score (McClelland, 1961).
Achievement Motive	McClelland Koestner, Weinberger (1989) defined the Achievement Motive as being "concerned with doing something well" (p. 693).	The Achievement Motive is defined as desiring to accomplish goals, and fulfill responsibilities (McClelland Koestner, & Weinberger, 1989; Yamaguchi, 2003).
Power Motive	McClelland (1987) defined the Power Motive as "a 'concern for having impact" (p. 153).	The Power Motive is defined as wanting to direct others so one can actualize a desired outcome (McClelland, 1987).
Affiliation Motive	Utilizing the work of Atkinson, Heynes, and Veroff, (1954), and Boyatzis (1973), authors McClelland Koestner, and Weinberger (1989) defined the Affiliation motive as "the desire to establish, maintain, or restore warm relationships with people" (p. 692).	The Affiliation Motive is defined as wanting to create and sustain connections with others (Atkinson, Heynes & Veroff, 1954; Boyatzis, 1973; McClelland Koestner, Weinberger 1989).

Motives and Superior Effectiveness

Upper-tier Superiors

McClelland and Boyatzis (1982) described the "leadership motive pattern" (McClelland, 1975) as a pattern that empowers individuals to be effective managers at upper-tiers of an organization. McClelland and Boyatzis explained that such managers possessed a pattern of

"being at least moderately high in *n* Power, lower in *n* Affiliation, and high in self-control, or Activity Inhibition" (p. 737). So, managers with a strong Power Motive, a weak Affiliation Motive, and strong self-control, were typically effective managers at upper tiers of an organization.

Lower-Tier Superiors

McClelland and Boyatzis (1982) tested whether any correlation existed between the Achievement Motive and managerial success over a 16 year period. They used the TAT to measure Achievement. McClelland and Boyatzis (1982) followed up with the individuals after 16 years to measure managerial success. They found a significant positive correlation between the Achievement Motive and managerial success. However, this correlation strictly applied to the lower-tier superiors [managers] who did not possess a technical background. McClelland and Boyatzis (1982) defined "Nontechnical managers" (p. 738) as managers who are assigned tasks such as "accounting, marketing, administration, and personnel-related functions" (p. 738).

Achievement Motive and Volume of Sales

Chusmir and Azavedo (1992) studied whether a connection existed between the three motives (Achievement, Power, and Affiliation) and volume of sales. Chusmir and Azavedo predicted that a positive correlation existed between a CEOs' Achievement Motive and the "relative sales performance of the company" (p. 599), in 1988-1989. Chusmir and Azavedo utilized an adaptation of Winter's (1991) TAT to measure need scores. Chusmir and Azavedo (1992) found limited support for their hypothesis. Specifically, Chusmir and Azavedo discovered a significant positive correlation between the Achievement Motive and volume of sales in the second year, but not the first.

Achievement Motive and Lower-Tier Managers

According to Nandi (2008), a front line manager position is "typically the entry level line position . . . for fresh college graduates" (p. 59). Additionally, Nandi explained that a front line manager's superior tended to be a mid-tier manager. Thus, a front line manager tends to be a lower-tier manager. Nandi explained that front line managers regularly assign duties for subordinates to complete.

Nandi (2008) claimed that individuals who are highly achievement oriented typically create challenging objectives that they are capable of completing. Nandi added that achievement oriented individuals typically value performance feedback. Stressing the importance of that information, Nandi contended that organizations should hire front line managers who possess a strong Achievement Motive, and that "developing achievement motivation in the existing frontline managers are vital for higher order organizational performance" (p. 60).

Determined to discover if any correlation existed between the Achievement Motive and front line manager performance, Nandi administered the TAT to a sample consisting of 100 managers. All of the front line managers were employed by four organizations in Maharashtra, India. Nandi found that only 27% of the sample had a strong Achievement Motive.

Intensity Motives

Motives and Job Selection

McClelland (1965) investigated whether a connection existed between mens' Achievement Motive and selection of entrepreneurial business professions. McClelland provided some examples of entrepreneurial professions such as "sales" (p. 390) or running one's own

business. McClelland found that 60% of the entrepreneurs in his sample possessed high levels of need for achievement. However, McClelland found that 79% of non-entrepreneurs had a low level of need for achievement.

Intensity of Motives among Top-Tier Managers

Harrell and Stahl (1981) desired to determine the strength of management executives' Achievement, Power, and Affiliation Motives. They hypothesized that the Power Motive (McClelland, 1987) is the main motive for management executives. Harrell and Stahl (1981) used a profession-seeking, "decision-making exercise" (p. 243) to measure need for Achievement, need for Power, and need for Affiliation scores. Harrell and Stahl (1981) found support for their hypothesis, as management executives tended to select professions that would fulfill their Power Motive.

Likewise, Verma (2017) investigated which of three motives (Achievement, Power, and Affiliation) was the most potent in top-tier managers. Verma (2017) used an adaptation of Sanghi's (1998) Need Pattern Scale to measure the three motives. Verma (2017) found that the Achievement Motive was the strongest motive for top-tier managers.

Superior Assessment of Subordinate Performance

Fodor and Farrow (1979) investigated the connection between superiors' Power Motive and their use of power. Fodor and Farrow administered the TAT to measure the superiors' Power Motive. Fodor and Farrow (1979) investigated the connection between supervisors' Power Motive and their use of power. Fodor and Farrow administered the TAT to measure the supervisors' Power Motive. They hypothesized that a superior with a strong Power Motive would judge the performance of a subordinate who exhibited a high level of flattery to be better

9

than the performance of a subordinate who exhibited low level of flattery. Fodor and Farrow (1979) found evidence to support their hypothesis.

Affiliation Motive and Communication Preferences

Lansing and Heyns (1959) investigated whether a positive correlation exists between Affiliation Motive strength and the frequency of use of "four forms of communication: (a) use of long distance telephone for social calls, (b) use of the local telephone, (c) writing letters, and (d) visiting close friends and relatives living at a distance" (p. 365). Lansing and Heynes (1959) measured need for affiliation scores by using the TAT. They discovered that the Affiliation Motive was positively associated with local phone use and the use of letters.

Interpersonal Communication Motives

Rubin, Perse, and Bartato (1988) introduced the Interpersonal Communication Motive scale (ICM). The ICM contains "six factors… [which are] pleasure, affection, inclusion, escape, relaxation, and control" (pp. 615-617). Rubin et al. (1988) determined each of these six motives explains why we communicate interpersonally. The pleasure motive is defined as communicating with others for excitement and enjoyment (Rubin et al., 1988). The affection motive is defined as communicating with others to convey compassion for another (Rubin et al., 1988). The inclusion motive is defined as communicating with others to be in the company of others, and to reduce feelings of isolation (Rubin et al., 1988). The escape motive is defined as communicating with others to "fill time" (Rubin et al., 1988, p. 615). The relaxation motive is defined as communicating with others to reduce stress. Lastly, the control motive is defined as communicating with others to "gain [their] compliance" from them (Rubin et al., 1988, p. 617).

Downs and Javidi (1990) investigated whether any the six interpersonal communication motives identified by Rubin, Perse, and Barbato (1988) were predictors of loneliness in seniors. Downs and Javadi (1990) found that the affection motive negatively predicted loneliness. Downs and Javadi added that "these subjects reported talking 'to people to let others know I care about their feelings,' or 'to show others encouragement'" (p. 46).

Javidi, Jordan, and Carlone (1994) explored the connection between the need for control and two variables: communicating to attain compliance from others and negotiating with others. Javidi et al. (1994) found that the need for control is significantly positively related to communicating to attain compliance. On the other hand, the need for control was significantly negatively related to negotiating with others. This finding illuminates how individuals with a strong Control Motive may be less flexible or adaptive in their communication behaviors with others.

Communication Competence

Now that we have reviewed motives and how they relate to other variables, we will review the topic of Communication Competence. A person with a high level of Communication Competence draws upon his or her knowledge, motivation, and skill to socialize effectively (Spitzberg, 1983). Spitzberg (1983) argued that knowledge, skill, and motivation were "conceptually related and integral to each other, and that 'communication competence' provides a reasonable and useful umbrella under which to shelter them" (p. 327).

Superior Communication Competence and Subordinate Satisfaction

Madlock (2008) investigated the impact that superior communication competence had on two variables: employee job satisfaction and communication satisfaction. Madlock (2008)

hypothesized that superior communication competence was positively related to both employee job satisfaction and employee communication satisfaction. He measured superior communication competence with the Communicator Competence Questionnaire (Monge, Backman, Dillard, & Eisenburg, 1982). He measured job satisfaction with the Abridged Job in General scale (AJIB; Russell, Spitzmuller, Lin, Stanonton, Smith, & Ironson, 2004). Madlock (2008) measured communication satisfaction with the Interpersonal Communication Satisfaction Inventory (ICSI; Hect, 1978). Madlock (2008) reported that his hypothesis was supported as significant positive relationships were found.

Interpersonal Communication Motives and Communication Competence

Martin and Rubin (1994) found that communicators with a strong control motive reported lower levels of competence as a communicator. In contrast, communicators who have a strong affection motive, moderate pleasure motive, and a moderate relaxation motive reported higher levels of competence as a communicator.

Communication Competence and Social Behavior

Zakahi and McCroskey (1989) defined Willingness to Communicate (WTC) as the "tendency to approach or avoid communication" (p.98). Teven, Richmond, McCroskey, and McCroskey (2010) investigated how WTC was related to Self-Perceived Communication Competence (SPCC). They found a direct relationship between WTC and SPCC.

Communication Competence and Conflict Behavior

McKinney, Kelly, and Duran (1997) explored how communication competence affected conflict behavior. McKinney et al. (1997) studied three conflict styles: "self-oriented, issue

oriented, or other oriented" (Ross & DeWine, 1988, p. 187). McKinney et al. (1997) explained

that an individual who uses the self-oriented style focuses on their own aspirations. They

explained that an individual who uses the issue-oriented style stresses that opposing sides must

collaborate to manage conflict. They suggested that an individual who uses the other-oriented

style will focus on "keeping the other party content" (p. 187). They measured Communication

Competence using the Communicative Adaptability Scale (CAS) (Duran, 1982, 1992).

McKinney et al. (1997) measured Conflict Styles via the Conflict Management Message Style

instrument (CMMS; Ross & DeWine, 1988). They found significant positive correlations

between the issue-oriented style and only three dimensions of communicative competence: social

confirmation, appropriate disclosure, and social experience. They also found that use of both the

issue oriented and other oriented conflict styles were significantly positively related to social

confirmation, appropriately disclosure, and social experience. In contrast, McKinney et al.

(1997) found an inverse relationship between use of self-oriented style and self-reported

articulation, social experience, and social composure.

Elements of Communication Competence

Communicative Adaptability

Communicative adaptability is an essential element of communication competence

(Duran, 1983). Communicative adaptability is defined as being able to identify and comprehend

the connection one has with another person, and then appropriately modify one's communication

behavior with that person (Duran, 1983). Duran (1988) listed six dimensions of communicative

adaptability: "social experience, social confirmation, social composure, appropriate disclosure,

articulation, and wit" (p. 137).

Social experience is the knowledge and skill set one has obtained from the past while socializing with new people (Duran, 1988; K. Sager, personal communication, April 9, 2019). Social confirmation is an individual's capacity to discern and respect another's self-image (Duran, 1988). Social composure is acting self-assured during interactions with others (Duran 1988). Appropriate disclosure is expressing suitable information while conversing with others (Duran, 1988). Articulation is modifying one's expressed messages to meet normative standards (Duran, 1988). Wit is a skill that involves introducing humor to alleviate discomfort in a social situation (Duran, 1988).

Communicative Adaptability and Relationship Satisfaction

Duran and Zakahi (1988) examined the connection between communicative adaptability and roommate satisfaction. Duran and Zakahi (1988) predicted an individual's positive judgment of a "roommate's communicative adaptability" (p. 138) would make them want to continue living with that person. Duran and Zakahi (1988) found evidence to support their hypothesis.

Gareis, Merkin, and Golman (2011) investigated how international students' communicative adaptability impacted number of friends, and friendship satisfaction. They found that communicative adaptability was significantly positively related to both the number of American friends and satisfaction with American friendships.

Communicative Adaptability and Conflict Behaviors

Schumacher (1997) investigated subordinate communicative adaptability and conflict styles displayed during conflicts with superiors. Schumacher (1997) found that more adaptive individuals typically used nonconfrontational conflict styles. Shumacher (1997) also found that less adaptive individuals tend to used more controlling conflict styles.

Downward Communicative Adaptability

Downward Communicative Adaptability and Downward Abusive Communication

Downward Communicative Adaptability refers to a superior's ability to identify and comprehend the connection that he or she has with a subordinate, and then interact appropriately with the subordinate (Sager, Wallace, Jarret, & Richey, 2015). Sager et al. (2015) hypothesized that "a superior's score on the Downward Communicative Adaptability Scale (DCAS) [Sager & Wallace, 2012a] is a significant negative predictor of his or her score on the Downward Abusive Communication Scale (DACS) [Sager and Wallace, 2012b]" (p. 4). Sager et al. (2015) found support for their hypothesis. They found that downward communicative adaptability was a negative predictor of downward abusive communication.

Table 1.2

Term	*Definition*	*Author definition*
Communication Competence	Communication Competence is a person's use of "Motivation, Knowledge, and Skill" to interact properly with others (Spitzberg, 1983, p. 324). Spitzberg (1983) argued that knowledge, skill, and motivation were "conceptually related and integral to each other, and that 'communication competence' provides	A person with a high level of Communication Competence draws upon his or her knowledge, motivation, and skill to socialize effectively (Spitzberg, 1983).

	a reasonable and useful umbrella under which to shelter them" (p. 327).	
Communicative Adaptability	Duran (1983) defined communicative adaptability as "the ability to perceive socio-interpersonal relationships and adapt one's interaction goals and behaviors accordingly" (p. 320).	Communicative adaptability is an essential element of communication competence (Duran, 1983). Communicative adaptability is defined as being able to identify and comprehend the connection one has with another person, and then appropriately modify one's communication behavior with that person (Duran, 1983).
Downward Communicative Adaptability		Downward Communicative Adaptability refers to a superior's ability to identify and comprehend the connection that he or she has with a subordinate, and then interact appropriately with the subordinate (Sager, Wallace, Jarret, & Richey, 2015).
Social Experience	Duran (1988) defined social experience as "a desire to participate in various social groups and experience novel situations, resulting in a repertoire of role behaviors" (p. 137).	Social experience is the knowledge and skill set one has obtained from the past while socializing with new people (Duran, 1988; K. Sager, personal communication, April 9, 2019).
Social Confirmation	Duran (1988) defined social confirmation as "the ability to perceive and support the other's social image" (p.137).	Social confirmation is an individual's capacity to discern and respect another's self-image (Duran, 1988).
Social Composure	Duran (1988) defined social composure as "the ability to remain calm and composed in	Social composure is acting self-assured during interactions with others (Duran 1988).

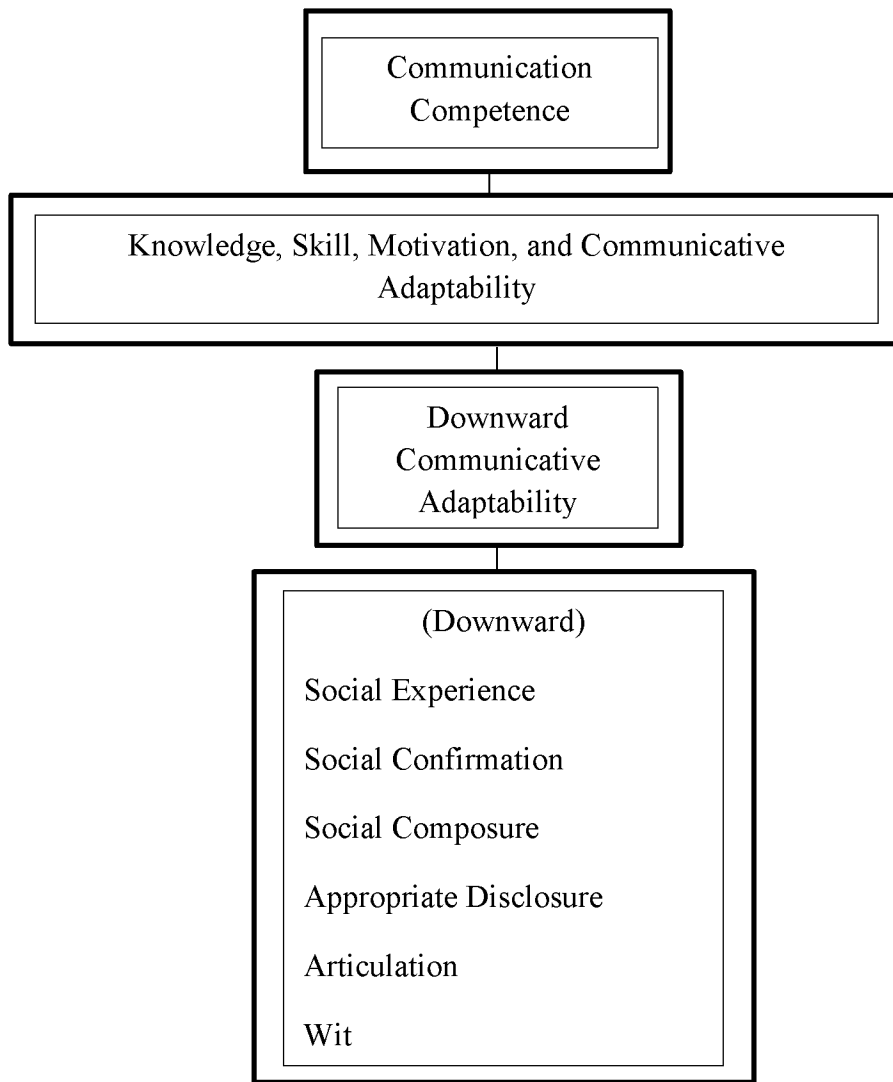|		
	social situations" (p.137).	
Appropriate Disclosure	Duran (1988) defined appropriate disclosure as "the ability to perceive the appropriate level of verbal intimacy given the context, topic, and target" (p.137).	Appropriate disclosure is expressing suitable information while conversing with others (Duran, 1988).
Articulation	Duran (1988) defined articulation as "the ability to adapt one's language style to the conventions of the social group" (p.137).	Articulation is modifying one's expressed messages to meet normative standards (Duran, 1988).
Wit	Duran (1988) defined wit as "the ability to diffuse social tension by making light of it" (p.137).	Wit is a skill that involves introducing humor to alleviate discomfort in a social situation (Duran, 1988).

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┌─────────────────────┐
│    Communication    │
│     Competence      │
└─────────────────────┘

┌──────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Knowledge, Skill, Motivation, and Communicative │
│              Adaptability                  │
└──────────────────────────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────┐
│      Downward       │
│    Communicative    │
│    Adaptability     │
└─────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────────────┐
│         (Downward)          │
│                             │
│     Social Experience       │
│                             │
│     Social Confirmation     │
│                             │
│     Social Composure        │
│                             │
│   Appropriate Disclosure    │
│                             │
│     Articulation            │
│                             │
│     Wit                     │
└─────────────────────────────┘
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Figure 1.1

Hypothesis

Individuals with a strong Achievement Motive desire to satisfy their motive by completing goals and earning rewards (Yamaguchi, 2003). Achievement-oriented individuals typically create challenging goals for themselves to complete, and typically value performance feedback (Nandi, 2008). I theorize that a manager or superior with a strong Achievement Motive

would typically desire to be successful in the workplace. Front line managers, who are typically lower-level managers, assign tasks to their subordinates (Nandi, 2008). These lower-level managers are "are responsible for the implementation and control of the operational plans developed by the middle managers" (Nandi, 2008, p. 60), meaning they have significant tasks to complete. If a manager fails to adapt his or her messages, his or her subordinates may misunderstand assigned tasks and, as a result, the subordinates may perform poorly. Poor performance from subordinates can negatively affect a manager's performance. Therefore, I argue that a manager with a strong Achievement Motive would want to adapt his or her communication with his or her subordinates. This chain of reasoning leads to the following hypothesis.

H1: There is a positive relationship between a superior's Achievement Motive and his or her Downward Communicative Adaptability.
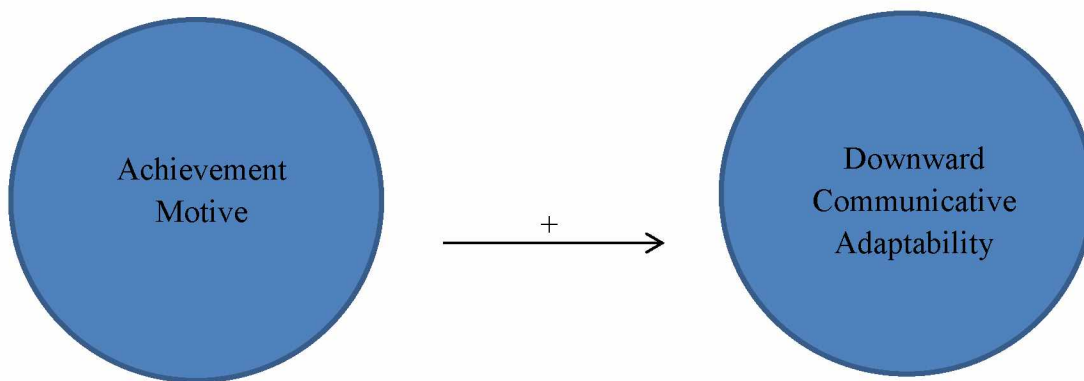

Figure 1.2

Methodology

Participants

The sample consisted of 124 superiors in a northwestern state. Each participant indicated that they were a manager or supervisor. Participants were required to be 18 years old. Participants ranged in age from 18 years old to 80 years old. The majority of participants were White non-Hispanic/Caucasian (79.0%) followed by Multiracial (4.8%), Hispanic (4.0%), Alaskan Native (3.2%), Other (3.2%), Pacific Islander (1.6%), and Unreported (4.0%). In the study, 51 participants self-identified as male and 69 participants self-identified as female. Four participants did not report their biological sex.

Procedure

Organizations and university instructors were contacted by e-mail, in person, or by phone to request permission for survey administration. Each participant needed to give his or her consent to participate. Survey results were entered into an SPSS data file and later analyzed.

Measures

Achievement Motive

Achievement Motive items were included in a larger, three-section survey. The Achievement Motive was measured by Sager and Weaver's (2017) adapted version of Yamaguchi's (2003) "Perceived Importance of Needs" scale (p. 332). Yamaguchi's (2003) original survey instrument measures the Achievement Motive, the Power Motive, and the Affiliation Motive. Yamaguchi's (2003) scale consists of ten, 7-point Likert-type items (1 is least important and 7 is most important) pertaining to the Achievement, Power, and Affiliation Motives. In Yamaguchi's (2003) study, he reported that the Cronbach alpha values were .82 for the Achievement Motive, .70 for the Power Motive, and .65 for the Affiliation Motive. In the present study, the Achievement Motive was measured by four, 9-point Likert-type items (1 is

20

strongly disagree, 9 is strongly agree) contained in Sager and Weaver's (2017) adapted version of Yamaguchi's (2003) "Perceived Importance of Needs" scale (p. 332). In this study, the Cronbach's alpha value was .72 for the four Achievement Motive survey items. A participant's overall score on the adapted Achievement Motive scale was calculated by determining the mean of the participant's four responses.

Downward Communicative Adaptability

Downward Communicative Adaptability was measured using Sager and Wallace's (2012a) Downward Communicative Adaptability scale (DCAS). Sager and Wallace's (2012a) DCAS is an adaptation of Duran's (1983) Communicative Adaptability Scale (CAS). Sager and Wallace's (2012a) DCAS consists of 30, Likert-type 9-point scale items (1 is Never and 9 is Always). Sager, Wallace, Jarrett, and Richey (2015) reported a Cronbach's alpha value of .72 for their 30-item Downward Communicative Adaptability Scale. In the present study, the Downward Communicative Adaptability Scale has a Cronbach alpha value of .84. A participant's overall score on the Downward Communicative Adaptability scale was calculated by determining the mean of the participant's 30 responses.

Results

Evidence was found to support the hypothesis. A correlational analysis revealed that a significant, positive correlation exists between the Achievement Motive (M = 8.17, SD = .83) and Downward Communicative Adaptability (M = 6.82, SD = .73), r (113) = .41, p < .001. In this analysis, alpha was set at .05, and a two tailed test was conducted.

Discussion

Study Rationale

The Achievement Motive is defined as desiring to accomplish goals, and fulfill responsibilities (McClelland Koestner, & Weinberger, 1989; Yamaguchi, 2003). In his study, Yamaguchi (2003) explained that an individual with a strong Achievement Motive desires to reach his or her goals, and earn rewards. Nandi (2008) argued that Achievement-oriented individuals create challenging goals for themselves, and want performance feedback.

In this paper, I reasoned that a manager or supervisor with a strong Achievement Motive would typically desire to be successful in the workplace. Nandi (2008) explained that front line managers are typically lower-tier managers, and that they typically have the responsibility of assigning tasks to their subordinates. Nandi (2008) added that front line managers "are responsible for the implementation and control of the operational plans developed by the middle managers" (p. 60).

Because of this desire to be successful in the workplace, it is essential that managers or supervisors adapt their messages downward to their subordinates. If a manager fails to adapt his or her messages, his or her subordinates may misunderstand assigned tasks and, as a result, the subordinates may perform poorly. Sager, Wallace, Jarrett, and Richey (2015) explained the importance of an individual possessing the ability to adapt his or her communication behaviors as it promotes positive relations with others. Sager et al. (2015) further explicated how an individual in a "position of authority" (p. 6) who lacks the ability to adapt his or her communication behaviors may have a low level of success. It logically follows that managers or supervisors with a strong Achievement Motive would want to adapt their communication downward to their subordinates, which should help their subordinates complete their tasks.

Hypothesis

In this paper, I hypothesized that there is a significant positive relationship between the Achievement Motive and Downward Communicative Adaptability. Evidence was found to support the hypothesis, as a significant positive relationship was discovered between the two variables. This means that the stronger the Achievement Motive, the more a manager or superior tends to adapt his or her communication behaviors downward.

Theoretical Implications

Motive theories (McClelland, 1987; McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, & Lowell, 1953) and Maslow's (1954, 1987) hierarchical needs theory are conceptually related because motives and needs determine an individual's desire to engage in a particular behavior (McClelland, 1987; McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, & Lowell, 1953; Winter, Stewart, Klohnen, & Duncan, 1998). Maslow's (1954, 1987) five needs are: "The Physiological needs, the safety needs, the belongingness and love needs, the esteem needs, [and] the self-actualization needs" (pp. 15-22). Maslow (1954, 1987) described the self-actualization need as wanting to reach one's full potential. He added that people must fulfill the first four needs before they can attempt to attain self-actualization.

A fundamental difference between these two theories is that Maslow's (1954, 1987) theory has a hierarchy of needs, whereas motive theories (McClelland, 1987; McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, & Lowell, 1953) do not. In Maslow's (1954, 1987) individuals must fulfill a lower level need before advancing toward the next higher level need. For example, a person must fulfill physiological needs before he or she can fulfill safety needs. On the other hand, motive theories (McClelland, 1987; McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, & Lowell, 1953) do not have a

hierarchy of motives. Individuals may develop different intensities for motives, but they do not have to satisfy one motive before they can satisfy others.

Practical Implications

The results of the present paper indicate that the stronger the Achievement Motive, the more a manager or supervisor tends to adapt communication behaviors downward. Sager, Wallace, Jarret, and Richey (2015) suggested that the ability to adapt communication behaviors downward positively affects one's success in a "position of authority" (p. 6). For these reasons, I argue that the stronger the Achievement Motive, the more successful a manager or supervisor will tend to be in the workplace. Moreover, McClelland and Boyatzis (1982) found a significant positive correlation between the Achievement Motive and managerial success, specifically for lower-level, non-technical managers. Therefore, organizations should consider hiring managers or superiors with a strong Achievement Motive, or consider "developing achievement motivation in the existing frontline managers [lower level managers]" (Nandi, 2008, p. 60) because such managers will tend to be more successful in the workplace.

Organizations could administer a questionnaire during interviews to determine the strength of a job candidate's Achievement Motive. Moreover, organizations could take approaches to strengthen current managers' or supervisors' Achievement Motive. McGregor (1960) suggested an approach called the "Principle of Integration" (p. 49), which involves organizations matching their goals to those of managers and supervisors. This approach could be mutually beneficial for both the organization and managers or supervisors.

Limitations

One limitation of the study was the sample size. While a sample of 124 is sufficient, a larger sample size tends to be more representative of the population. A larger sample could also increase Cronbach alpha values (Yurdugül, 2008). Yurdugül (2008) asserted that a minimum sample size of 200 could help achieve internal consistency reliability, meaning a sufficient Cronbach's alpha for a variable.

A second limitation was that the anonymous survey had a self-report, which is a limitation because of the "Social Desirability Bias" (King & Bruner, 2000). The social desirability bias is defined as a "pervasive tendency of individuals to present themselves in the most favorable manner relative to prevailing social norms" (King & Bruner, 2000, p. 80). While reporting their responses, superiors may have inflated just how downward communicatively adaptive they were with their subordinates.

Future Research

Fellow academics and communication students should consider investigating if and how the Achievement Motive affects other communication variables. For example, is there a relationship between the Achievement Motive and WTC (Zakahi & McCroskey, 1989)? With superiors being the sample in this study, and because it was discovered that a significant positive correlation exists between the Achievement Motive and Downward Communicative Adaptability, researchers should continue to research whether these variables relate to other variables in organizational communication contexts.

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