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Understanding the Importance of Ambition in the Workplace

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Human Resource and Workforce Development

by

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Abstract

Though a common term, ambition is a multifaceted concept that is vastly under researched despite it being labeled necessary for success in the workplace. Of even greater irony is that several sources indicate a significant majority of the reason that employees leave organizations is due to a perceived lack of career development or opportunity, a problem that speaks directly to talent management practices. In light the costly nature of this problem and the presence of sophisticated talent management professionals in large and medium-sized organizations which comprise half or more of the workforce, it causes one to question the assumptions that ambition is indeed valued in the workplace.

This constructivist study seeks to understand from both an employee and a managerial perspective how ambition is valued in the workplace. It leverages key theoretical constructs such as social cognitive theory and social cognitive career theory to understand aspects of the expression of ambition. Sixteen diverse working professionals with an average of over 20 years of work experience and nearly 10 years of managerial experience were interviewed about their lived experiences of how ambition is expressed and valued. Universally, participants agreed that ambition contributes to organizationally desirable outcomes including higher performance and increased retention as well as some participants noting other potential outcomes including increased innovation and even inclusivity. Despite this, the expression of ambition is highly attenuated by elements of organizational structure, the disposition of the proximal manager, as well as other variables including the gender expression of ambition.

Findings imply significant potential impact for talent management professionals and organizational leaders as they work to attract and retain talent in an increasingly competitive marketplace as well as suggest myriad other avenues for further inquiry.

Rationale and Dedication

As most of our waking lives play out in the workplace, I have focused my efforts here on trying to understand and evaluate the value of ambition at work. It is my sincere hope that this work serves to inspire and advance the professional practice of talent management.

I have many to thank and acknowledge for their contributions to my continuing journey. First, those of those most closely connected to the effort of my doctoral journey, Dr. Vicki Dieffenderfer, my advisor who has encouraged me and provided invaluable feedback to my many drafts to complete this ambitious endeavor. Also, my committee members: Dr. Carsten Schmidtke, a passionate teacher whose detailed feedback and comments in coursework and in this pursuit has made me better and, to Dr. Ed Pohl, a great leader for whom I have much respect and am grateful for his willingness to be a part of my doctoral journey. I owe Dr. Cynthia Field gratitude for developing the Workplace Ambition Measure and for her kindness in allowing me to use it for this study. Without her work, my own would have been more difficult. Thank you, Dr. Michael Moore for your encouragement, interest, and in particular, your leadership of eVersity and assistance in helping secure research participants. And, Dr. Javier Reyes, who in 2013 over conversation and coffee, gave advisement and encouragement in the decision to begin and end my doctoral journey at University of Arkansas.

In terms of those people who figure prominently in my life and helped me arrive at this point, my parents, grandparents, wife, and children are at the top of the list followed by the many teachers from kindergarten to college and graduate school that have made a larger impression than they are likely aware. It goes without saying, my parents, Jerry Bean and Viki Riley, as well as grandparents that are no longer with me – I wish they could see me achieve the success I

strive for - all of whom encouraged and admonished to do my best, to be better than they themselves were as part of their own ambition.

And my apologies for my never-ending quest to "do better" which certainly came across sometimes as "perpetually unsatisfied" – especially for my wife and children. I appreciate my wife Kristie, who attenuates and works to balance my intensity with her strong humanity and humility and has borne 20 years of my struggle with ambition and all that it brings with it. To my children, Riley, Lauren, and Taylor - to whom I have also tried to be both "more" and "better" as I feel I struggle more in efforts outside the workplace as the things that lead to success at work often do not always work so well in the home environment. I want them, more than anyone, to know my intention as they are a big part of the "why" behind my ambition to do better.

Thank you to the leaders in scouting I had as a youth and to those I have shared time around a campfire with as an adult, as well as athletic coaches, and those who have been my manager at work. Thank you to all those who believed in me, your efforts, exhortations, and feedback are deeply appreciated. Of all of those many people, I would call out Allen Brown, who invested much time in his service as Scoutmaster to continue to cultivate and direct my ambition as he worked to better prepare me and so many others young men for life.

There are those folks throughout my life have said particularly poignant or apt things that stand out… one very salient example is from my wife's aunt, Jeannie Earp, who noted in a conversation years ago on the desires of a parent for their children, "… you cannot want more for them than they want for themselves". It is a particular struggle as a parent to accept things like this and I find it often applies as much in the workplace to employees as it does at home.

As with many on a journey, I began this endeavor in part to "work out my own salvation". Though I have laudable achievements, my ambition has not been without significant cost. Rather, to believe one has wings and is meant to soar but to not achieve much beyond short hops of flight, interrupted by gravity and headwinds sometimes of my own making is frustration. So, both burdened and blessed, I sought to increase my own understanding as much as to advance knowledge… surely there are others with this dilemma? Perhaps my efforts might aid the flight (or plight?) of others?

Finally, this is dedicated to those who both have and struggle with ambition. And just as much, to those who struggle with certain folks with whom they wish had either more or less of it. Regardless of which group you are in, ambition needs to be better understood.

I am grateful.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Though the expression of ambition can range from an unqualified vice to a highly qualified virtue, its presence is sufficiently important that it is labeled as a "necessary factor in business success" (Wilcox, 2013, p. 7). The concept of ambition is deeply woven into the modern fabric of society in the United States and many view ambition as simply a facet of personality, yet this is an incomplete and not wholly accurate view (Jones et al., 2017). Despite the pervasiveness of the concept, ambition is under-represented in research literature, an especially ironic fact considering its common and seemingly easy-to-understand themes (Jones et al., 2017; Judge & Kammeyer-Miller, 2012; Siegling & Petrides, 2016). As a result, the value of ambition in the modern American workplace is unclear.

The Context: Ambition in the Workplace

Modern western cultures attach a great deal of importance and meaning for their lives around the concept of "work" (Chandra, 2012; Weber, 1992). The contextual focus of this inquiry is on what occurs in the workplace, specifically the elements of career that interface with talent management. While one's career ambitions may vary over time, theorists have elucidated various meanings to the career concept as being a source of need fulfillment, self-concept, group identity, and even existential meaning (Lent & Brown, 2013b).

In light of this, it should be realized that work should be viewed with a multi-faceted approach rather than asserting an exclusive lens through which one should see time and effort of individuals and the work concept (Field, 2002). Because of the nature of work and career, the expression of ambition can take various forms and should not be limited to being too narrowly defined as a desire for material goods or power (McClelland et al., 1953) nor are there only two options with "largely absent" at one extreme and "excessive" on the other (Carucci, 2020).

For a more composite idea of ambition, the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) (2013) identifies three needs and three drivers of ambition shown in Table 1 (Wilcox, 2013). Most of these needs and drivers align with a common theme of achievement, an element present in major theoretical constructs of the ambition concept (McClelland et al., 1953; Siegling & Petrides, 2016). However, just as no single perspective accounts for all behavior, individuals have varying needs and motives as well as degrees of effort and interest in meeting those needs. Though the expression of ambition can range from vice to virtue, CCL notes both necessity of ambition in business success yet insists that it must be a managed concept to be leveraged for career success in such a way so as not to "derail a career" when displayed in excess (Wilcox, 2013, p. 7) or be misinterpreted (Carucci, 2020).

Table 1
Needs and Drivers of Ambition

Need	Driver
Competence	Superiority, Competitiveness, Pride
Achievement	Drive, Control, Power
Rewards	Recognition, Profile, Status

Note: Summarized from *Managing ambition (1st ed.)*. by M. Wilcox, 2013. Center for Creative Leadership. Copyright 2013 by the Center for Creative Leadership

To properly manage this concept, it must be measured. While CCL provides a self-check of four items (recognition, work ethic, competitiveness, and individual success) which allows users to rank themselves from "moderate" to "extreme", this is not intended to be a validated instrument but rather a reflective self-assessment under the assumption that attendees in CCL workshops, because of selection bias, already possess some degree of ambition (Wilcox, 2013). To better understand the concept of ambition in the workforce, an understanding of the potential relevance of ambition is needed.

The Relevance of Ambition

An individual's career choices play out over the course of their lifespan in the workplace (Lent, 2013). Elements of ambition are relevant from both an individual and organizational perspective as ambition has been deemed a "necessary" element for success in the workplace (Wilcox, 2013). Further, it has even been labeled a "sleeping giant" regarding the potential for organizational and personal career impact of this concept (Siegling et al., 2019), a sought-after quality by hiring managers (Bersin & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2019), though it is often conflated or potentially confused with other useful constructs such as personality (Jones et al., 2016) or motivation (Silzer & Borman, 2017; Silzer & Church, 2009).

Modern, large organizations often have specialized functions in the areas of recruitment and employee development that are charged with the task of managing talent in "talent war" that is the battle that organizations fight both amongst and within themselves to acquire, deploy, and retain the right persons in the right roles (Chambers et al., 1998; Keller & Meaney, 2017). Despite this, there is little evidence that organizations understand, measure, or adequately address the concept of ambition in the process of talent management or workforce development (Jones et al., 2017; Judge & Kammeyer-Miller, 2012; Siegling et al., 2019; Siegling & Petrides, 2016). The irony of this approach creates the question of whether ambition is indeed valued in the workplace and, if so, to what degree. To provide research participants with a standardized, multifaceted concept of ambition and a way to gauge the extent of these facets of ambition, Field's Workplace Ambition Measure (WAM) (2002) is a validated assessment of the ambition concept that can be deployed to a wide audience. Importantly, the WAM also serves the purpose of creating a shared understanding which is useful as a conversation starter was utilized at the beginning of the interview process.

Measuring Ambition in the Workplace

During the development of the WAM instrument, five practical and distinctive themes emerged that are useful in characterizing the concept of ambition as it is manifested in career development (Field, 2002). To elaborate, from a psychological perspective, Field conducted an analysis of instruments purporting to measure more psychologically defined constructs of ambition in the development of the WAM. Thus, the one concept of ambition has five subscale items consisting of: "1) personal aspirations, 2) active and expressive engagement, 3) reliance on competitive and other external indicators for self-evaluation, 4) perseverance, 5) the degree of personal investment" (Field, 2002, p. 69) that together form a single comprehensive ambition concept capable of being measured and compared.

The question of whether ambition merits additional attention or consideration as a salient topic as success in the workplace has widespread association with aspirational and achievement orientations, two themes assessed by the WAM, yet there remains a noted lack of evidence of utilization of the ambition concept (Jones, et al., 2017; Judge & Kammeyer-Miller, 2012; Siegling, et al., 2019; Siegling & Petrides, 2016). Despite messaging and cultural artifacts that reflect aspects of ambition, the inability of modern medium and large organizations that often have sophisticated in-house talent management functions to facilitate the selection, assessment, development, and placement of skilled workers (Kotlyar, 2018; Silzer & Borman, 2017; Silzer & Church, 2009) only contributes to the question if ambition is actively managed or even valued in the modern work environment.

The Modern Workplace & Ambition

Given the dominance of career upon life in the US and other western cultures, career choices are important and directly and indirectly have impact on virtually every aspect of those in the workforce (Lent & Brown, 2013a). From the time someone begins school, their success in varying disciplines plays a significant role in occupational choices and, consequently, socioeconomic status and social mobility (American Psychological Association (APA), 2019). It is important to note the choices made regarding education and vocation are not simply localized to an individual as they have many downstream, intergenerational consequences to society at large (APA, 2019). And, these choices and the options available are often made in the context of employment in which there is some shared responsibility between individuals and the organization in the context of a talent management function (Schuler, 2015; Thunnissen & Gallardo-Gallardo, 2017).

With nearly 50% of the US workforce employed by organizations with 500 or more employees (Fox, 2016), the organizational perspective of these career choices is labeled "talent wars" as individuals and organizations work, whether collaboratively or each as an individual agent, to find a fit or match for their mutual needs (Keller & Meaney, 2017). In these large organizations, the use of a dedicated full-cycle talent management organization charged with recruiting, hiring, developing, and managing talent is commonplace (Woolridge, 2006). The organizational battle sites for these metaphorical talent wars are where competition for the valuation, acquisition, retention, and disposition of employee effort occurs as companies vie for market share and profitability (Chambers et al., 1998). Considering the widespread adoption of internet-enabled digital technologies, this is an increasingly competitive space that has been

significantly flattened by as neither employees nor organizations are as limited by barriers of geography ("A third industrial revolution", 2012).

From the economic maximization perspective of for-profit organizations, the goal is that agentic, rational organizations desire to have the most talented individuals available for the longest time at the lowest price (Morgan, 1997; Simon, 1979). From an individual's perspective, the goal is also simple and resembles the organization's goal as the rational, agentic individual with limited information seeks to make choices that provide a range from maximizing or, at least, satisficing outcomes that would include compensation or other factors such as career advancement opportunities or other factors (Simon, 1955).

Combining the basic desires of individuals with the significant resources and will of large modern organizations, organizations are potentially missing key synergies when they do not systematically explore the opportunities to influence and encourage the ambitions of employees. In organizations, the employee-manager relationship is especially important as an employee's proximal manager is the primary mediator of systems, policies, and processes of the organization (Chiaburu & Lim, 2008; Gill, 2008; Kane-Urrabazo, 2006; Whitener et al., 1998). Managers commonly assess performance as well as consider employee needs or desires in providing feedback which impacts advancement or promotion decisions and future opportunities (Steffens, et al., 2018). As an example, employees who want to advance in the organization may work longer hours or demonstrate other engaged behaviors such opting for more demanding work to signal a desire to get ahead or, they may deliver increased performance (Burke et al., 2014; Hogan & Holland, 2003). The desire to get ahead is often expressed as a familiar definition of ambition yet it does not fully encompass the concept though it can be a valuable resource to the organization (Benschop et al., 2013). A failure to recognize ambition can result not only in the

mis-assessment of current opportunity readiness but can also impact the future performance of the employee which may result in reduced consideration for future opportunities (Steffens et al., 2018). In effect, the organization that does not develop and keep its most talented employees will lose them to a market that may well find them working for competitors.

Problem Statement

In spite of this considerable relevance of ambition in the career development process, there is a notable scarcity of research on the topic of ambition which creates uncertainty regarding its actual relevance or value in the workplace despite many studies which note both the high salience of ambition to talent selection, performance management, or career outcomes as well as the scarcity of research on the topic (Bersin & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2019; Desrochers & Dahir, 2000; Jones et al., 2017; Judge & Kammeyer-Miller, 2012; Ng et al., 2005; Pettigrove, 2007; Siegling & Petrides, 2016).

Talent management comprises a wide range of human resource activities within the context of organization that is inclusive of selection, placement, development, and succession planning (Chambers et al., 1998; Schuler, 2015; Thunnissen & Gallardo-Gallardo, 2017). In this regard, the Work Institute notes that voluntary turnover accounts for three of every four separations and represents a $630 billion cost to organizations in the US alone (Mahan et al., 2019) with a lack of career development noted as a top reason for these departures (Achievers, 2020; Akhtar, 2019; Conference Executive Board (CEB), 2015; Gallup, 2017; Mahan et al., 2019; Morris, 2018). In addition, the total that US organizations collectively spend on training and development in 2019 is $83 billion (2019 Training Industry Report, 2019). As such, ensuring this training is delivered to the right individuals with both the desire to benefit, the

ability to develop their potential as part of their own strategy to advance their career, and who are likely to stay at the organization are valid concerns (Bynam et al., 2002).

From the perspective of talent management, the two aspects of the ambition concept most related to career advancement and development are elements of the themes of achievement and aspiration (Field, 2002) which reflect an employee's ability to actualize the biological drive of "getting ahead" in life and career choices (Hogan & Holland, 2003; Tracy et al., 2015, 3:30). In the context of the workplace, appropriate career development programs and processes show an effort on behalf of the organization to find, develop, and retain good employees in productive roles (Chambers et al., 1998; Schuler, 2015; Thunnissen & Gallardo-Gallardo, 2017). Despite this, the result is lack of career opportunity or development is frequently cited as a top reason employees leave an organization (Achievers, 2020; Akhtar, 2019; Conference Executive Board (CEB), 2015; Gallup, 2017; Mahan et al., 2019; Morris, 2018).

Outside of a very limited audience that is the target of Hogan Personality Assessments or CCL activities and literature, there is little evidence of ambition being used in any purposeful, structured means (Evatt, 2019; King, 2013; Wilcox, 2013). Given the thematic alignment of the ambition concept with career success in the workplace, it may be possible for organizations to take advantage of the ambition concept by assessing and managing an employee's career development accordingly to retain a high-performing workforce. Thus, this study sought to elucidate the potential value of organizations being aware of and more actively managing the ambition concept via the following problem statement: Is ambition valued in the workplace? This question was addressed by first assessing the extent to which a shared working definition of ambition exists and then by exploring the central research question via both an employee and a managerial perspective, each with a short series of questions that probe the respective question.

Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this qualitative research was to explore the research questions:

1. Based on the WAM (Field, 2002), is ambition valued in the workplace from the view of the employee?

2. Based on the WAM (Field, 2002), is ambition valued in the workplace from the perspective of managers and supervisors?

This research was undertaken from a constructivist philosophy in that the question of the value of ambition in the workplace will be explored by examining the extent to which it is useful and present by examining the lived experiences of participants (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Further, it reflects a deeply constructivist approach as it relies heavily on self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) and related constructs including the socioanalytic model of personality (Hogan, 1982), self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), and social cognitive career theory (Lent 2013b) in which the concept of agentic individuals figures prominently and utilizes interviews as a means by which one might "know the truth" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013).

The main research question of this study sought to determine how, or even if, ambition is valued in the workplace by interviewing experienced managers in an organization. The value of ambition was assessed by three sections of questions. The first section is intended to ensure a shared understanding of the multifaceted ambition concept and stimulate introspection while the second section explores the extent that the interviewee feels there is value in ambition by asking how they, as managers themselves, value the ambition of employees under their supervision. Since interviewees had at least two years of managerial experience, the third section of questions was asked on this additional aspect of the expression or value of ambition in the workplace.

After administering the WAM and briefly reviewing the results, three questions that have the intent to both build rapport and appropriately frame the concept of ambition and assess the extent of a shared understanding were asked.

The interview questions are shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Interview Question Outline

Interview Focus	Interview Questions
Section I Understanding the ambition concept.	1. Review the pre-interview WAM (2002) assessment noting the five themes, 1) personal aspirations, 2) active and expressive engagement, 3) reliance on competitive and other external indicators for self-evaluation, 4) perseverance, 5) the degree of personal investment (Field, 2002, p. 69). 2. Based on this information, how has your view of ambition in the workplace changed? 3. Based on the WAM, to what extent do you think that adequately captures how you think about ambition?
Section II As an employee, is ambition valued?	1. As you developed professionally, how was your own ambition a factor in that? 2. To what extent, if any, was your ambition a factor that your supervisor or management in your organization considered? How? 4. From your view, how important is it to consider ambition as a factor in any of the areas of talent selection or acquisition, development, or performance management? Why or why not? 5. How would things be different if your supervisor or organizational management valued ambition more?
Section III (as applicable) As a manager, is ambition valued?	1. As a manager, how or to what extent do you value ambition? 2. How is ambition valued in your organization? 3. How important is it to consider ambition in any of the areas of talent selection or acquisition, development, or performance management? (processes) 4. How important do you think the consideration of ambition is to desirable organizational outcomes such as engagement, productivity, retention? (outcomes) 5. How would things be different for employees if you or organizational management valued ambition more?

Significance of Problem

The topic of ambition has been largely overlooked in academic research (Jones et al., 2017; Judge & Kammeyer-Miller, 2012; Siegling & Petrides, 2016). Further, its expression can be associated with highly positive or highly negative characterizations that have significant bearing on one's ability to both "get along" and "get ahead", two universal motives of people in modern organizational life (King, 2013; Tracy et al., 2015, 3:30). Despite the relevance of this topic, the most recent and applicable literature makes note of its conspicuous absence (Jones et al., 2017; Judge & Kammeyer-Miller, 2012; Siegling & Petrides, 2016).

In addition to being an insufficiently resolved issue in its own right, several studies indicate that an individual's career ambitions, in conjunction with their own career development and the reality of their situation, are a significant factor in and related to employee engagement (Albrecht, 2010; Fairlie, 2011; Fleck & Inceoglu, 2010). Both behavioral conditioning (Skinner, 1938) or social learning (Bandura, 1977) provides a simple yet plausible explanation for the case that positive reinforcement of ambition by internal feelings of competency and autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000) or, explicitly by career progression or compensation would reward this striving behavior (McClelland et al., 1953). By reviewing the abundant data on the related concept of engagement, it is possible to gain some insight into the potential hidden value or contribution of ambition in the workplace. From an organizational perspective, the optimal achievement of an organization's goals, whether financial or social, is thus highly dependent on employee engagement which represents the extent to which employees give discretionary efforts toward goal achievement in such was as enthusiasm and commitment (Gallup, 2019). In research covering over 1,800,000 employees over most every industry and country, there are significant correlates of engagement with many measures of individual and organizational performance

including "41% lower absenteeism, 70% fewer safety incidents, 17% higher productivity… [and] 21% higher profitability" in organizations that have more "engaged" employees (Gallup, 2019, p. 5). An organization that effectively manages the engagement concept would have a potential source of competitive advantage by matching ability, need, and desire of workers with organizational goals as well as by reducing frustration that is likely to result when an individual's ambitions are not matched by either their career path or appropriate counseling or development (Benschop et al, 2013; Matthews et al., 2003; Plachecki, 2003; Steffens et al., 2018). Finally, and of direct impact to organizations is the idea that ambitious behaviors are linked to both pay expectations and career satisfaction (El Baroudi et al., 2017).

Theoretical Basis for Study

The primary theoretical framework utilized is social cognitive career theory (SCCT). SCCT represents a highly evolved, validated, and broadly applicable career theory that is inclusive of both trait-factor and process-based career theories (Lent, 2013).

The SCCT framework emphasizes inputs of both personal agency as well as contextual factors that contribute to as well as understand three related outputs of career development: 1) career interests, 2) career choices, and 3) performance and persistence (Lent et al., 1994). Importantly, SCCT represents the evolution of decades of values, motivation, and career theory research and is a comprehensive means to understand how people connect to a job or career. (Lent, 2013). As it evolved from trait-factor based theories, SCCT notes factors such as interests and personality as exerting significant influence career decisions, yet it also incorporates "fit" considerations which evokes the importance of the interaction between individual elements and organizational elements such as culture and other distinguishing job or position aspects (Lent, 2013). However, SCCT goes further in recognition of elements outside the individual and

beyond the position or immediate organization as it considers more complex and dynamic "total environmental" factors such as technology or the overall climate of organizations in the modern economy that operate in the background and provide a contextual framework in which the interaction of individuals, jobs, and organizations plays out (Lent et al., 1994).

The SCCT framework asserts that both 1) cognitive development and social learning as well as 2) self-efficacy concepts are the key inputs in individual career choice and development (Lent & Brown, 2013b). Theorists of the school of cognitive psychology focus on how individuals perceive and process information and take the perspective that most conflicts are the result of a misperception of information caused by a faulty processing framework, or "selective processing" in which certain information reinforcing a negative perspective is given extra weight (Clark et al., 1999). This is important as it forms a basis by which learning and development with subsequent emotional and behavioral adaption occur in the workplace as individuals possess agency and interact with environmental factors, both key tenets of SCCT (Lent, 2013).

The input of social learning is best stated by Bandura (1977) in which, "…social learning theory approaches the explanation of human behavior in terms of a continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental determinants" (p. vii). This system acknowledges the behavioral perspective that learning by operant conditioning occurs yet is tempered by internal cognitive processes and drives in the context of dynamic social interactions (Bandura, 1977). The behavioral component serves to both motivate and reinforce certain behaviors, though social learning goes one step further, indicating people learn from observation of the environment by modeling adaptive responses thus resembling vicarious learning scenarios in which people learn by witnessing reinforcement schemes applied to others (Bandura, 1977).

As a result of SCCT's evolution from Social Cognitive Theory, it underscores the significant influence of environmental factors that can influence choices such as financial considerations, social factors, or performance expectations among others (Lent, 2013). As a person advances through their career, the journey is marked by a combination of achievement and struggle. Achievement is easily recognized by wages, a title, or span of organizational influence, control, or regard (Lent, 2013). Alternatively, struggle is noted by conflict or competing commitments at work or between work and non-work environments when efforts directed to task mastery, promotion, or other achievement result present sources of frustration, a lack of career satisfaction, or engagement (Lent, 2013). As a result, the SCCT framework is capable of understanding and adding value to diverse situations as it blends elements of interest alignment, self-efficacy, appropriately incrementally graded experiences, expectations management, performance management, and career development and satisfaction (Lent, 2013).

Defining Ambition

It is likely most people have an idea of what ambition is due to such positive, popular, and pragmatic phrases such as "drive" and "fire in the belly" which readily evoke descriptions that present evidence of at least a basic shared understanding (Siegling & Petrides, 2016; Fire in one's belly, 2009). Despite this, a more than an anecdotal understanding will be necessary to have a more elaborate definition of ambition as a concept to bring clarity to what it is and, importantly, to what it is not. Though the WAM was utilized to give study participants an overview of the multifaceted concept of ambition, it is also important to also understand the nuances of the ambition concept in the literature to aid and clarify understanding of key behavioral constructs. Consequently, it is then possible to reliably measure it and as well as subsequently posit the operational utility that ambition might have in the workplace.

Ambition vs. Motivation. Though the overall concept of ambition is widely known, multiple sources often evoke achievement-focused language which reflect the general understanding that many modern Americans hold (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012; King, 2013; McClelland et al., 1953; Siegling & Petrides, 2016). While a single article does not necessarily constitute authority, Siegling & Petrides (2016) cast ambition as the colloquial concept of "drive". Further, they note the concept of "ambition" is often tightly coupled to the concept of "motivation" (Siegling & Petrides, 2016). Despite the frequent coincidence, they distinguish ambition from motivation by noting the focus of the former (ambition) is on the "how much and to what extent" aspects of behavior while the latter (motivation) focuses on "reasons" or the "why" to explain behavior toward or away from a given outcome (Siegling & Petrides, 2016). This is very much in line with McClelland et al., (1953) perspective on "motivation" theories from the 1950's in which they declared the motivation concept focused more on direction and less on intensity or level of activity. It was this understanding of ambition which is found in the over half century old work of McClelland's Human Motivation Theory with its focus on "achievement" striving (McClelland et al., 1953). Thus, ambition is related to the concept of motivation though there is some agreement that the "ambition" term is more aligned with the extent to which directed activity is present rather than its direction.

Achievement Orientation. Ambition is often closely paired with a focus on achievement or mastery (Brim, 1992; Epstein, 1980; Spinner & Featherman, 1977; Talevich et al., 2017). This conceptualization of ambition squarely fits the more anecdotal description of a person as being very driven or having a competitive nature (Field, 2002; Pettigrove, 2007). The notion of achievement orientation represents a singular, easy-to-grasp, and important component of the ambition concept which can lead to a myopic but incomplete focus on a single element of what it

means to be ambitious. This occurs frequently enough so that the achievement orientation aspect

is the focus of Epstein (1980) in which he narrowly and anecdotally defines ambition as "the fuel

for achievement" for the future-minded (p. 1). These future-minded plans are expressed on a

continuum of positively stated "healthy aspiration" to the negative "intolerable narcissism" and,

are not always tied to material achievement though it often is easier to focus on this singular

aspect of the highly visible attainment of material things (Judge & Kammeyer-Miller, 2012).

As ambition is a common -yet-under-researched concept, a review of the working

definitions in the literature illustrates a similarity and overlap in major themes (see Table 3).

Table 3
Working Definitions of Ambition from Literature

Source	Definition
Otto et al. (2016, p. 23)	A combination of the pursuit of extrinsic career success in terms of pay and position and intrinsic success as the positive subjective evaluation of professional development. The extent to which an individual has "high achievement motivation and strong career orientation".
Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller (2012, p. 759)	A "middle-level trait" expressed as persistent, aspirational desire to better one's situation by "striving for success, attainment, and accomplishment".
Elchardus & Smiths (2008, p. 248)	People who "entertain plans and goals…", strive toward career advancement and would "agree to define themselves as ambitious".
Pettigrove (2007)	The extent to which an individual has a desire to rise in the form of commitment or determination that result in resilient and persistent behavioral action to achieve hard-to-achieve goals.
Field (2002, pp. 69)	The extent to which one is described as or identifying significant, "1) personal aspirations, 2) active and expressive engagement, 3) reliance on competitive and other external indicators for self-evaluation, 4) perseverance, 5) a degree of personal investment in a desired outcome."
Hansson et al. (1983)	Individuals with high "drive" or level of effort leveraged against task completion, vigor, and assertiveness as well as presenting a level of intensity and impatience as a trait-like characteristic.
Hogan & Schroeder (1980)	A personal characteristic resulting from an internalized goal setting and aspirational desire
Epstein (1980, p. 1)	"Fuel for achievement".

In working to arrive at a comprehensive and correct definition of ambition that reflects its true multifaceted nature, Field's (2002) work features an evaluation various existing measures and expressions of the concept of ambition to arrive at eight initial subthemes for quantitative evaluation (Field, 2002). These eight subthemes initially consisted of 81 items reflecting, "… 1) significant aspirations, 2) aggression, 3) productive energy, 4) perseverance, 5) competition, 6) single-mindedness, 7) novelty, and 8) visibility…" (p. 43) with each subtheme supported by one or more assessments and further qualitatively validated by a panel of individuals that were familiar with the concept prior to distribution to 210 participants for further testing and refinement (Field, 2002). Using factor evaluation, these 81 items yielded 25 non-redundant factors that were able to be sorted into 5 major themes reflecting, "1) personal aspirations, 2) active and expressive engagement, 3) reliance on competitive and other external indicators for self-evaluation, 4) perseverance, 5) the degree of personal investment" (Field, 2002, p. 69). It is these 25 factors that comprise the Workplace Ambition Measure (WAM) that provide the final insight needed to create the definition of ambition by reverse engineering Field's assessment. This step provides not only the working definition but an aligned assessment.

Thus, for this study, ambition is be defined as a stable, relatively enduring and measurable psychological construct that addresses the "how much" and "to what extent" aspects of motivation rather than the "why" element (Siegling & Petrides, 2016, p. 1). Further, it is acknowledged that ambition, as a concept, is readily evoked and commonly understood by such anecdotal descriptions as "drive" or "fire-in-the-belly" (Siegling & Petrides, 2016; Fire in one's belly, 2009). It should be noted that ambition can be expressed positively or negatively and, does not focus exclusively on achievement orientation but includes elements of personal active

engagement and future-oriented desired state that involves persistence-over-time and personal investment that often features elements that are measured against external or competitive indicators (Field, 2002; Siegling & Petrides, 2016).

Assumptions, Limitations, & Delimitations

Key assumptions of this study are that working persons between the ages of 30 and 50, especially those who are employed with organizations that have a professional talent management function, will have formed meaningful, relevant, and articulatable perspective on both their own ambition as well as relevant perceptions or informed opinions on those most proximal to them from an organizational perspective (i.e., one level above or below their own).

Though the sample size is likely sufficient to detect any significantly present condition or theme (Galvin, 2015; Guest et al., 2006; Hennink et al., 2017; Rijnsoever, 2017), an assumption of this study is the applicability of the ambition concept in various workplaces and industries. This can be contrasted with a limit in which a sample of only one industry which may not be sufficient to present adequate evidence of experimental effect that is not present or manifested in different industries. Though the concept of ambition is considered a universal theme, it may nevertheless play out differently in various settings. As such, sampling so that multiple industries would be represented would further increase validity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Another delimitation of this study is the decision to completely exclude any aspect of "political" ambition. Though the Latin word origin and precursor to "ambition", "ambitio" (pp. 14-15), reflects an etiological meaning with exclusive reference to political ambition may seem an odd choice yet, ambition remains a widely used and anecdotally understood concept outside of this vast but specific realm (King, 2013). Though large populations are likely substantially affected by those who win elections, the ambition of political office is deemed an overly narrow

application. This study seeks to focus on elucidated the value of ambition in the workplace, a

different and arguably even more universally experienced phenomena.

This study included both the perspective of the employee and that of a manager on the

value of ambition by interviewing workers who represented the object of efforts by the

organization viz-a-viz management to interpret, and implement organizational culture (Chiaburu

& Lim, 2008; Gill, 2008; Kane-Urrabazo, 2006; Whitener et al., 1998) as well as who possess

managerial experience on the other side of this equation.

An additional limitation is that interviews questions were targeted to employees who are

between 30 to 50 years old. While there is evidence that personality and various traits are

generally stable after age 16 (Damian et al., 2019), given the focus of this research is situated in

the workplace, it is generally by age 30 that, "an individual's entry into the work world [is]…

tempered by the reality of his or her actual accomplishments." (Field, 2002, p. 98). On the other

side of the selected age range, while age 50 in no way represents obsolescence, most college-

educated male workers' peak earnings occur in their early-mid 50's (Perez, 2019). Though there

is not complete gender equity in wages for men and women, the range of ages 30 to 50

incorporates the midpoint of the difference between the sexes (Perez, 2019). From a practical

perspective, citing 2017 Federal Reserve data indicating less than 10% of workers retire before

age 50 and a median age of retirement at age 62 (2018, https://dqydj.com/average-retirement-

age-in-the-united-states/), this age is sufficiently removed from retirement that striving behaviors

are more likely to occur and thus would capture the essence of the focus of this research, that is,

to discover the value of ambition in the workplace. In summary, regarding the employees who

are being managed, ages 30 to 50 are selected to represent an age in which ambition, if present

from an individual perspective and if recognized or developed from an organizational perspective, will be ripe for the assessment of its value.

A limit of scope is present in that many good, related questions were not pursued. In the development of the WAM, Field noted additional questions such as, "Is ambition predictive of professional success?", "Do ambitious employees realizes their dreams?", and what barriers "derail ambitious professionals?" (Field, 2002, p. 111). These and other questions seem related to, yet remain distinct from, the question of the extent to which ambition is valued in the workplace by organizations. As such, while they represent interesting lines of inquiry, the present research endeavors to remain focused on exploring the value of ambition from the individual employee's or "bottom-up" perspective while gathering managerial or "top-down" perspective only when this perspective is additionally present as a convenience.

An additional limit of scope is a focus only on the outcome of turnover rather than the numerous theories or models of employee turnover and the exact means by which ambition may or may not be a factor. Specifically, there is no differentiation, comparison, or exploration of turnover intention or other predictors of turnover with actual separation. There is an abundance of research on turnover and the concern of this study is only that turnover is real, costly, and research indicates career development is major element for which ambition may be relevant.

Other limitations include the theoretical basis being selected as Social Cognitive Career Theory which represents an evolution of numerous prior theories and, most notably, a reliance upon Bandura's work on social learning theory and self-efficacy concept (Lent, 2013). Considered alternatives include prior career theories such as the more pure "matching models" (Lent, 2013, p. 29) of Dawis & Loftquist's Theory of Work Adjustment (Dawis & Loftquist, 1984; Lent, 2013) or even Hogan's Socioanalytic Theory of Personality (Hogan, 1982). This

choice was as SCCT is a highly applicable career-focused theoretical construct which reflects or forms a basis for many elements of alternative perspectives.

In addition, though several personality paradigms are considered, Hogan's Socioanalytic Theory of Personality (1982) is deemed to be in greatest agreement with the overall approach of the author. This is likely the result of the foundation of the socioanalytic model having a foundation with Bandura's social cognitive approach as well as Hogan's extensive work on personality derailers when certain traits are either absent or expressed in excess of desirable levels (Bandura, 1977; Hogan Assessments, 2019). In addition, Socioanalytic Personality Theory is grounded in the familiar, well-tested five-factor theory yet presents a valid extension of it that increases its utility (Hogan, 1982).

Finally, the relevance, presence, and sensitivity to issues of gender, sex, and imbalances of power in the workplace and culture in general are greater than perhaps ever before considering the viral rise of the "me too" movement (Burke, 2020). Despite the potential salience of these issues in the treatment of ambition in the workplace as well as the potential effect of greater-than-usual unemployment and other workplace irregularities in the wake of the COVID-19 global pandemic, these issues are set aside for the present study.

Summary

Ambition is a common and pervasive concept that has been labeled essential for vocational success yet has somehow escaped the extensive attention of academic literature. The concept of ambition is sometimes conflated, confused, or entangled with the related concept of motivation though it is conceptually different. Ambition is often narrowly focused on achievement or associated with personality constructs. By first understanding foundational concepts and an explicitly stated definition, ambition can be examined from the context of the

workplace in which most medium-to-large sized organizations have professionals dedicated to all aspects of talent management. The goal of this study is to interview experienced managers to determine if ambition is valued in the workplace from the perspective of the organization.

Definition of Key Terms

The following terminology is presented for understanding of a limited set of key terms used within this volume.

Agency – A description of the phenomena to be able to exert discretionary choice and action on a situation; to substantially determine one's own course of behavior rather than simply reacting reflexively or automatically (Bandura, 2001).

Ambition – A relatively stable, multifaceted psychological construct that may be obscured by popular Five-Factor Personality Models of personality (Jones et al., 2017) that describes and alters behavior and behavioral intentions comparative to others or a referent "self" in the following areas: "1) personal aspirations, 2) active and expressive engagement, 3) reliance on competitive and other external indicators for self-evaluation, 4) perseverance, 5) the degree of personal investment" (Field, 2002, p. 69). Anecdotally, ambition is the often expressed as the level of "drive" or "fire in the belly" of behavior or behavioral intention and often conflated with "motivation" (Fire in one's belly, 2009; Judge & Kammeyer-Miller, 2012; Silzer & Borman, 2017; Silzer & Church, 2009; Siegling & Petrides, 2016).

Career Progression (Career Advancement) - An aspect of talent management focuses on achieving and aligning the individual's career interests, and potential with the organization's opportunities and needs (Capelli & Keller, 2014).

Competitiveness – Activities or thoughts in which one compares or evaluates various aspects of one's own performance with the actual or potential performance of others (Field, 2002).

Drive – A term descriptive, evocative, and "synonymous" with ambition (Siegling & Petrides, 2016, p.14) with only one study (Siegling et al., 2019) noting it as potentially distinctive concept *(*Fire in one's belly, 2009; Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012; Siegling & Petrides, 2016).

Engagement – A description of the extent to which a person is active in their interaction in situations or others (Field, 2002).

Five-Factor Personality Models – The underlying dominant structure of a number of personality models based upon the primary dimensions of openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (Goldberg, 1990; Jones et al., 2016; Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012; Matthews et al., 2003).

Motivation – A description of the "what" or motive element that drives or underlies behavior or behavioral intention. This term is often conflated with "ambition" (McClelland et al., 1953; Siegling & Petrides, 2016).

Performance Management – An aspect of talent management focuses on aspects of 1) defining and measuring and 2) achieving and aligning the individual's performance with the organization's goals (Lawler, 2017).

Perseverance – A description of the duration or persistence of behavior or behavioral intention toward or away an object (Field, 2002).

Personal Aspiration – A description of the extent to which a person has or expresses desire to achieve a certain outcome often but not necessarily tied to achievement (Field, 2002).

Personal Investment – A description of the extent to which an individual is willing to be highly involved or agentic in behaviors directed to creating a desired end-state (Field, 2002).

Process-Based Career Theory – Career theories that place a premium on contextual or situational factors that influence career choice and development (Gothard, 2001).

Self – Efficacy – The extent to which one's referent self has belief that a certain task or outcome can be achieved; a measure of instrumentality in creating a desired outcome (Bandura, 1977).

Talent Management - The human resource function of an organizations whose role prioritizes the selection, placement, development, and succession activities of human capital assets (Chambers et al., 1998; Schuler, 2015; Thunnissen & Gallardo-Gallardo, 2017).

Trait- and Factor-Based Career Theory – Theories focused on trait-based factors such as abilities, interests, personality, etc. to influence career choice and development (Gothard, 2001).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The previous chapter introduces the concept of ambition as both an essential element in career development and provides evidence that it may be an overlooked concept in academic research. In addition, social cognitive career theory (SCCT) (Lent et al., 1994) was provided as an overarching theoretical lens through which the relevance of personal agency, self-efficacy, personality, motivation, and other elements in the context of career development and progression in the workplace including the highly variable state of talent management practices. Chapter 2 provides a review of key literature that underlies each of these topics.

In the pursuit of understanding the value of ambition in the workplace, it is necessary to examine factors and concepts that can be categorized as either endogenous or exogenous to the individual. Endogenous or internal topics are focused on the psychological and behavioral understanding of ambition. In defining ambition from this internal perspective of what ambition looks or feels like, it seems there are a number of colloquial and anecdotal descriptions in which phrases such as "drive", "fire-in-the-belly", "motivation" (Fire in one's belly, 2009; Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012; Siegling & Petrides, 2016) as well as such self-evident indicators that one "knows it when [they] see it" readily applies (Jacobellis vs. Ohio, 1964, p. 197). Though these are colorful and perhaps even insightful or accurate, it is necessary to understand ambition as a distinct psychological concept. Upon examination, it is apparent that ambition is related to concepts of motivation, self-efficacy, and as well as personality. Additionally, it is more extensive than a simple focus on achievement. Regarding exogenous or external topics necessary to understand the application of the ambition concept in the modern workplace setting of medium to large organizations, the related topics of 1) talent development, and 2) career development are relevant. As such, a review of the literature of conceptual underpinnings, related

concepts, contextual topics as well as a review of the assessment of ambition as precursors to the study of the value of ambition in the workplace.

Achievement and Motivation

A useful first step is to examine and then disentangle concepts and theories of motivation from often comingled concepts of ambition. The two are likely conflated as evidenced by their use in common speech as well as conflation in career development (Silzer & Borman, 2017; Silzer & Church, 2009). That is, if a person is label as being ambitious, they are likely motivated yet, just because they are motivated does not mean that they are ambitious. The term "motivation" is often used to address two different questions regarding human behavior: 1) why someone behaves as they do and, 2) to what extent a given behavior is exhibited (McClelland, 1987; Siegling & Petrides, 2016). In other words, there is a difference between motivational reasons and motivational level, respectively. Of these, former is far more akin to the ambition concept and merits elaboration (Siegling & Petrides, 2016).

Notwithstanding this distinction, one motivation theory has significant focus on the need for achievement, which is often an element associated with ambition and as a result, potentially contributes to the conflation. Specifically, McClelland's Theory of Acquired Needs postulates that people have three fundamental needs: the need for affiliation, the need for power, and the need for achievement which exists as reasons for behavior, a basis more typically aligned with the ambition construct than motivation (McClelland, 1961; McClelland, 1987). Though McClelland (1961) did an exceedingly admirable job tying the overall milieu of achievement orientation to the rise of economic development in western Europe, he extended this to the individual level by indicating that those with a high achievement orientation have a recognizable personality type. Further, he noted that there are other associated aspects of the individual which

also contribute or even hinder their "success" such as excessive self-serving behaviors (McClelland, 1961). However, of particular interest, is McClelland's indication that there are other aspects of the ambition concept such as a "dynamic attitude toward time" and "motion" that are archetypal elements of the ambitious person as well as themes of perseverance (McClelland, 1961, p. 304). Conceptually, this underscores that the concept of ambition is not to be overly dominated by the idea that achievement orientation or material success represents an exclusive or exhaustively complete picture of a larger picture of what ambition represents both as an idea and behaviorally in the workplace (McClelland, 1961).

In regard to the validation and alignment of the three needs that McClelland identified in his theory, though McClelland distinguished power from achievement (McClelland & Burnham, 1976), it seems quite reasonable that these two are potentially related or perhaps intertwined in practice yet McClelland distinguishes power from achievement principally with the focus of a desire for group or organizational influence rather than personally or individually focused on self in the case of the latter (McClelland & Burnham, 1976). It is also possible that, in practice, ambition may simply be perceived as often co-existing with power and achievement without McClelland's distinction.

Self-Determination and Self-Efficacy

An additional framework that merits examination and which has similar features to aspects of McClelland's and Hogan's work is that of Ryan and Deci's self-determination theory (2000). At the onset, it is worth noting that Ryan and Deci define motivation as "concern[ing] energy, direction, persistence, and equifinality" as "aspects of [motivation] activation and intention" which reflects as especially broad and inclusive view of motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 69). Despite this inclusivity and its namesake focus on "self-determination", the theory indicates

there are three key psychological needs to be satisfied: competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Though there is no reference to either Hogan or McClelland, the parallels to both are clear though a clear difference with McClelland's work (1987) is a focus on the situational and social context that aid or hamper the development of an actualized self-concept via behavioral responses (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Interestingly, in the espousal of their Self-determination theory, Ryan and Deci (2000) note that there are both intrinsic and extrinsic factors that affect motivation and indicate an individual has an ability to self-regulate. Further, Ryan and Deci (2000) note that these factors are accompanied by conditions that can sustain or extinguish such internal processes, even in the face of extrinsic motivational factors or other context. Perhaps the greatest relevance to a study on ambition is, through their (Ryan & Deci, 2000) inclusive definition of motivation which includes reference to not simply direction but level. Thus, to disentangle ambition as a distinct concept from motivation, it is important to understand that motivation is a concept which can refer to either what a person's interests are as well as the level or extent to which they are motivated to pursue them (Siegling & Petrides, 2016). This is the conceptualization of Siegling and Petrides (2016) that is complimented by a host of theorists that reinforce this approach including McClelland (McClelland, 1987) as well as Ryan and Deci (2000).

An additional concept that is somewhat similar to Ryan & Deci's self-determination theory (2000) as well as potentially conflated with or entangled within the concept of ambition is that of "self-efficacy" (Bandura, 1977, p. 193). Coined by Bandura, this durable construct is central to several clinical as well as vocational approaches to help individuals manage behavior change and outcomes (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1982; Lent et al., 1994). In summary, self-efficacy theory indicates that individuals make judgements about their own perceptions of their ability to

successfully execute actions or achieve certain outcomes (Bandura, 1977). These beliefs cause individuals to exert more (or less) effort towards outcomes which, in turn, has a significant effect on the achievement of that outcome in question (Bandura, 1982). Beliefs of efficacy arise from "performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, or emotional arousal" and vary according to dimension of magnitude, generality, and strength (Bandura, 1977, pp. 194-395). Bandura later elaborates on the concept of self-efficacy noting it has a key role in determining "… goals and aspirations, outcome expectations, … and perception of impediments and opportunities in the… environment" (Bandura, 2006, p. 309).

Self-determination and self-efficacy may seem like two phrases for the same concept yet, they are distinct in the literature. Self-determination theory (SDT) is comprised of the three factors of 1) autonomy, 2) competence, and 3) relatedness that drive an individual's potential lack of motivation (extrinsic or intrinsic) levels (Sweet, Fortier, Strachan, & Blanchard, 2012). Alternatively, Bandura's self-efficacy theory (SET) is a task-specific form of behavioral intention with an outcome expectation component (Bandura, 1977).

Though similar in many ways, the key difference, according to Sweet et al, (2012) is the location and nature of agency within each model. Specifically, in SET, behavior is initiated when individuals feel able whereas, in SDT, there is a greater emphasis on the individual's autonomy, referring to the perceived situational support of the environment regarding choices and subsequent enablement of a potential decision (Sweet et al, 2012). Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2001), in which the idea of agency in which one has the ability to make purposeful, self-directed changes as a result of cognitive process and action is a key element to effect actual changes in behavior and outcomes is the concept that is reflected in Bandura's extension of self-

efficacy as well as in Deci & Ryan Self-determination theory via the key element of autonomy, expressed as "a perceived locus of causality" (Bandura, 2001; Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 70).

Both self-efficacy and self-determination concepts have inputs and outcomes reflected in the concept of ambition and are related, and potentially confounding, concepts. Ambition invokes personal aspirations, task perseverance as well as personal investment which are likely related strongly to intrinsic motivation levels while the external indicators of outcome validation and social situation reflect strongly on the social psychology roots of both models (Bandura, 1977; Field, 2002; Sweet et al., 2012). As such, both self-efficacy and self-determination are likely to be instrumental in understanding the related-but-distinct and separate concept of ambition.

The Continuum of Constructs

In further consideration of what ambition is or what it means to be described as ambitious, it is important to think about the underlying construct of what is being described. Common words that have distinct meaning in the field of personality psychology are concepts such as "mood" or "attitude" (Watson, 2000) which can reflect elements of the ambition concept yet do not fully capture what it means to be ambitious in terms of durability or malleability. In considering the question of psychological construct level of ambition, it seems to be situated as both more a complex and enduring concept than either an emotion or a single behavior yet is more pervasive and durable than attitude or mood though it is somewhat less comprehensive than the level of personality (Judge & Kammeyer-Miller, 2012). To give additional clarification, on one end of such a psychological construct continuum, Azjen (2001) indicated that an attitude is a "summary evaluation" (p. 28) that has an object. Thus, a person one can have an ambitious attitude, yet the concept of ambition generally operates on a level that is thought of a being broader and more durable than an attitude. Rather, when describing someone as being ambitious, this

characterization points to a stickier, more stable level of construct, much more like that of personality rather than what an attitude and the even more transient psychological affective concept of mood elicits (Watson, 2000).

At the other end of the psychological construct continuum from mood, perhaps the most stable, enduring high-level construct that reflects the lens through which one consistently and regularly views and interact with the world around us is the construct of personality (Ardelt, 2000). Though ambition seems to be more enduring in nature than an attitude, it is a somewhat less wholistic and comprehensive construct than the level of personality yet, is more than what might be labeled a facet of one personality based on Five-Factor Models (Judge & Kammeyer-Miller, 2012). Specifically, Judge & Kammeyer-Miller call ambition out as a "middle-level trait" very similar to but not quite as durable or stable as typical personality factors and more contextual in nature (2012, p. 759).

These middle-level traits connect the generality of higher-level traits with the concrete action of behavior (Cantor, 1990). In a similar vein, Siegling et al., (2019) note a "limited degree of shared variance with [Big 5] personality [elements]" (p. 6). And, in reference to ambition's relationship to the construct of personality, Jones et al., (2017) attest that current personality models, "…do not ignore ambition; they obscure it" (p. 12).

Personality

People have a remarkable range of personality and, even in the broad swathes of arguably similar personalities, there is a range of expression that can vary by situation. Despite this range of individual differences, people generally often have remarkably stable and consistent tendencies of interaction with their environment and with one another (Boyle et al., 2008). This is the definition of personality and, though ambition is arguably not a primary factor of the

dominant 5-factor view of personality, it is expressed as a similar, stable, and related construct (Jones et al., 2017; Judge & Kammeyer-Miller, 2012).

The Five Factor Model (FFM) of Personality is the widely accepted, dominant personality construct as it represents a convergence of the literature (Block, 2010; McCrae, 2010). The Big 5 represent the five personality traits summarized by the OCEAN acronym popularized by Costa & McRae (1992) as being openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Classified as a "trait theory" which "focuses on specific characteristics rather than typologies of people" (Hogan & Smither, 2001, p. 27), personality is assessed by such tests as the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) (Hathaway & McKinley, 1943), the California Personality Inventory (CPI) (Gough, 1948), and the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF) (Cattell & Stice, 1957) (Hogan & Smither, 2001).

Goldberg (1990) provides an excellent historical detailing of how the five factors were initially established by the lexical approach conducted by Allport and Odpert's in their seminal 1936 work. In total, Allport and Odpert (1936) took 18,000 descriptive words from the English dictionary of the time which they distilled into about 4,500 stable traits into four categorical lists containing neutral "trait" descriptive words, mood or temporary emotional terms, evaluative terms, and miscellaneous descriptive terms. Approximately ten years after this seminal and, at the time, exhaustive manually calculated cluster analysis, Goldberg (1990) notes that Cattell (1943) advanced matters as he further divided the list of traits into 35 clusters of bi-polar terms that aptly provided a term by which someone might describe another person (Goldberg, 1990). In analyzing these by factor analysis such that the least number of unrelated terms appear (i.e., orthogonal rotation), five factors emerged. Despite this simplicity of having just five factors, it should be noted that when more advance mathematical methods (i.e., oblique rotation) were

utilized, up to 12 factors emerged (Goldberg, 1990). The different outcomes by alternative methods of analysis reinforces the idea presented by McCrae (2010) that "comprehensive does not mean exhaustive" (p. 58). Though the five factors can be viewed as accurate and thorough, there are alternatives that succeed in explaining a greater extent of variance in personality.

Though there are other models of personality theory, the Socioanalytic Theory of Personality (Hogan, 1982) was selected based upon its robust underpinnings as well as it practical value in the vocational space. The foundation of this model is aligned with the consensus view in personality models which are based on or originates from the Five Factor Model (FFM) (Block, 2010; McCrae, 2010; Parks-Leduc et al., 2015). SAM began with the fundamental model of five factors which Hogan and Holland (2003) evolved to utilize a seven-factors model based on a split of the extraversion trait into two factors of ambition and sociability and, the openness trait into creativity (labeled intellectance) and school success. Though still congruent with prior five-factor models, this seven-factor adaptation following a revised factor analysis allows enhanced explanatory power as a result of better alignment with the dual motives of "getting ahead" and "getting along" as a biological basis of how and why people behave as they do (Hogan & Holland, 2003, p. 100; Tracy et al., 2015, 3:30). In general, the trait factors of emotional stability (neuroticism), conscientiousness, and agreeableness align and predict "getting along" behaviors while traits of emotional stability, Extraversion (via ambition), and openness (via intellectance) concur with "getting ahead" behaviors featured in the Socioanalytic Theory of Personality (Hogan & Holland, 2003, p. 100).

The Socioanalytic model of personality features aspects of personality labeled as personality traits along with one's motives and values, developed abilities, and the stories that make sense of one's self and situation. These are the units of analysis that interact with the

situated roles-in-culture that form an integrated model of personality in context of a dynamic environment and are thus explicitly incorporated into a holistic consideration of how a person interacts with others and the work environment (Roberts, 2006, p. 6).

Socioanalytic Theory of Personality (Hogan, 1982) is situated in the overarching recognition themes of the biological basis of the theory that people are social animals and thus always live and work in groups and further, these groups are always structured within a hierarchical system of belonging. This context results in two broad motive drives, the drive to "get ahead" and the drive to "get along" (Hogan & Holland, 2003, p. 100; Tracy et al., 2015, 3:30). While not to be dismissive of McClelland's psychological needs of power and achievement, there is alignment with Hogan's more inclusive Socioanalytic Theory of Personality (Hogan, 1982; McClelland, 1961), also later referenced as the Socioanalytic Model (SAM) [of Personality] (Hogan & Holland, 2003). An added benefit of this is the influence of the views of humanistic theories of motivation incorporated into Hogan's theory which attest to the urge of the human situation to "make sense of it all" (Tracy et al., 2015, 3:30) as a dominant theme of personality and motivation (Frankl, 1984; Hogan, 1983).

A key feature that researchers and practitioners have been seeking since the 1950's or even before is a functional conceptualization of the interplay between personality, values, and the work environment (Spranger, 1953). This effort was thwarted as those values often aligned with personality traits, there were combinations that simply did not up to a unifying or consistent theme as certain traits lines up with certain values and not others (Parks-Leduc et al., 2015). Thus, the SAM (Hogan, 1982) seems to acknowledge the role of both the environment as well as agentic and determinate individual factors that contribute to a complex interaction and hard-to-predict but easy-to-understand practical outcomes.

As a unifying framework, SAM (Hogan, 1982) seems more than adequate as it provides a means to reconcile both values and personality traits within a broader conceptualization. In prior efforts to correlate values with personality, results are problematic as there is often no clear conceptual framework yet values figure prominently as a construct in belief systems and subsequent behavior or intentions (Furnham et al., 2005; Kuznetsova & Ibragimov, 2016; Parks-Leduc et al., 2015; Roccas et al., 2002).

These issues are substantially resolved by the application of the SAM (Hogan, 1982) in which the concept of values is baked-in to a workable theory that can be used to better understand human behavior (Roberts, 2006). SAM explicitly states that people will seek out roles and organizations in they are either fit (or can tolerate) or they will, over time, work to modify themselves or their situation (Roberts, 2006). How they view the situational fit is predicted by personality as well as values which further serve the purpose of describing how a person might respond to both tasks in the workplace as well as their efforts to change it (Dawis & Lofquist, 1976).

Ambition at Work

The three universal motives of the human condition are to "get ahead, to get along, and to make sense of it all" (Tracy et al., 2015, 3:30). In considering these goals and where adults spend most of their time, the workplace is the location for many of these goals to unfold. Entry into the US workforce is typically preceded by at least compulsory education through the 12th grade and, often, by some completion of the higher education process. With this, individuals are often exposed to at least some elements or vocational guidance as the focus of education is often stated in terms of vocational interests or potential aptitude as well as economic value to oneself as well as to the various levels of a global economy (Parsad et al., 2003).

According to pioneering vocational scientist Frank Parsons, "No step in life, unless it may be the choice of a husband or wife, is more important than the choice of a vocation" (1909, p.3). While work provides a certain economic return, it also serves as a source of multiple additional functions (indicated in Table 4).

Table 4
Description of the Purpose of Work

Concept Description	Theorist
Source of need fulfillment	Maslow
Source of public identity	Lent & Brown
Source of self-concept	Super
Source of group identity	Lent & Brown
Source of existential meaning	Csikszentmihalyi

Note: Summarized from "Understanding and facilitating career development in the 21st century", by R. Lent & S. Brown, 2013, in S. Brown, and R. Lent, (Eds.). *Career development and counseling: putting theory and research to work* (pp. 1-26). Copyright 2013 by John Wiley & Sons.

These various functions serve to underscore the dominance of the work concept in the modern world and the importance of the choices of individuals to pursue various lines of work as well as the organizational settings in which many of these choices unfold. Considering this, there are several theoretical perspectives that give insight and application to the work choices and career development of individuals.

Social Cognitive Career Theory

One dominant career theory presently in use that incorporates many elements of prior models is Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) (Lent, 2013; Lent et al., 1994; Leung, 2008). SCCT incorporates values and interests, the dynamic interaction of the situational environment, as well

as notions of career success and satisfaction regarding vocational choices (Lent, 2013). Modeled as an extension and application of Social Cognitive Theory framework, SCCT initially postulated three interconnected elements of 1) career interests, 2) academic and career choice options and, 3) persistence and performance in selected pursuits are the areas in which individuals exert agentic choices that guide their career development (Lent et al., 1994).

The first element of SCCT (Lent, 2013) also notes the dominance of interests as a key determinant of career direction in terms of positive choices in process such as academic or vocational preparation and outcomes such as employability, wages, or other factors. Interests provided the topical framework for what is likely the first scientific treatise on vocational guidance in the form of the seminal text, *Choosing a Vocation* (Parson, 1909). Parsons indicates that, aside from choosing a spouse, there is likely no more important decision in life than choosing a vocation to which one is well adapted (Parsons, 1909). Since that time over 100 years ago, even in the wake of a protean work environment that has evolved over the last few decades, this advisement holds as wise counsel. To discover the occupation to which one is well-adapted, some rigor applied to the question of one's interests, aptitudes, and abilities is a logical place to begin.

In terms of interest models, the work of Holland (1966) resulted in the idea that, as a result of "complex interaction of cultural and personal forces…", people can be accurately categorized into favoring one or more personality types of Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, or Conventional known as RIASEC (Nauta, 2013, p. 56). This framework casts an enduring, influential shadow that aligns, co-exists, and even validates other assessments. The dominance of the Holland RIASEC model is based on its robust replicability and extendibility to related constructs such as personality or values (Nauta, 2013). The RIASEC model is generally

construed as a hexagon to illustrate six different anchoring dimensions. Though studies indicate that it is possible to have more or even fewer than six categories, at least one study found a uniform distribution of titles across categories (Tracey & Rounds, 1995).

In addition, it is possible to layer two additional dimensions on top of the hexagonal RIASEC model (Holland, 1966) (Tracey & Sodano, 2013, p. 158). The first is Prediger's argument that the two dimensions of people vs. things or, data vs. ideas, underlie the RIASEC circumplex is conceptually simple and adds a conversational dimension to interests (Tracey & Rounds, 1995). Secondly, Hogan's broad classification using "sociability" vs "conformity" as useful constructs that "are common to various… type theories and associated with occupational choice" (Hogan 1982, p. 69). In summary, interests been upheld as a valid means to both conceptualize and actualize research of vocational interests as well as serve as an integral aspect of additional theories of human behavior (Tracey & Sodano, 2013).

As indicated, SCCT is an extension of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) (Bandura 2001). SCT has, as its centerpiece, employed the concept of self-efficacy as a primary means to explain and predict individual behavior (Lent & Brown, 2013b). As noted previously, self-efficacy is the cognitive mechanism which captures the idea that individual's belief that their own efforts can be successful as a basis for effective behavioral change (Bandura, 1977). SCT also depends on the idea that persons are "agentic", that is, they also exercise substantial free will and causation upon their own circumstances via being "self-organizing, proactive, self-reflecting, and self-regulating" (Bandura, 2001, p. 266). Thus, in a break from dominant behavioral school theories of the time in which behavior was largely considered to be the result of simply reflexive reactions to stimuli, Bandura posits it is the complex interaction of personal cognitive factors

such as one's knowledge or attitudes, behavioral factors such as skills, and environmental factors such as social norms or other influences (Pajares, 2002).

A central feature of SCT (Bandura, 2001) is that these forces act reciprocally to create, enhance, or diminish one's self-efficacy within the situated contextual environment in which they exist (Bandura, 1977). The belief that change is possible creates motivation for behavior which results in a change in outcomes and modulates the behavioral response towards or away from environmental factors such as social interactions or structural elements that can present reinforcing or diminishing influences (Lent, 2013). Thus, the concept of self-efficacy is a key element of SCCT as, in combination with outcome expectations, it is both a driver and moderator of one's interests and environment interactions (Lent, 2013). To clarify, to paraphrase the cliché quote of famed automobile innovator, Henry Ford, among others, "if you think you can or if you think you can't, either way, you are right" (Quote Investigator, 2015) is reflective of the power of self-efficacy. Specifically, the interests that someone shows in a particular vocation are shaped by belief in ability to successfully complete principal tasks and duties of that job. Further, this belief in an ability to successfully complete these duties further shapes interests.

Subsequently, Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory forms the basis for Lent's Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) which gives insight into initial and ongoing career decisions throughout their lifespan (Lent, 2013; Lent et al., 1994; Patton & McMahon, 2014). Specifically, SCCT represents both content theory, that is, individual and situational factors, as well as a process theory, that is, the evolution and interaction of the environment and personal factors (Patton & McMahon, 2014). The SCCT model specifies four overlapping concepts that form the basis for career outcomes: 1) interests, 2) choices, 3) performance and outcomes, and 4) satisfaction (Lent, 2013). A key consideration of this model is that it is not linear, rather, it

reflects complex interactions between all elements that both evolve over time and situations for explanatory power (Lent et al., 1994, p. 93). Further underscoring the value of the SCCT model is the overarching consideration of the interaction between individual and situational factors. This is specifically called out in the area of high-potential employee selection in organizational settings as, in the context of career development, the abilities and capabilities that an individual has are general recognized as having native individual components such as intelligence, emotional stability, or leadership skills that are shaped by assignments, roles, and situations.

Talent Management & Career Development

The idea of "talent management" is alternatively associated with either "the practices associated with lifetime careers in corporations" (Capelli & Keller, 2014, p. 306) or, simply a more empowered sounding iteration of the usual human resource function (Capelli & Keller, 2014). In either case, the emphasis on selection, placement, development, and succession activities of human capital assets are underscored regarding their importance (Chambers et al., 1998; Schuler, 2015; Thunnissen & Gallardo-Gallardo, 2017) despite there being no clear consistent definition of "talent management" in a survey of 62 peer-reviewed journal articles (Thunnissen et al., 2013).

Meyers and van Woerkom (2017) indicate that how an organization approaches talent management may likely have a greater effect than what the actual practice of selection, development, progression, and retention. Specifically, if an organization is of the belief that talent is scarce, they will act in accordance with the assumption that high-potential talent is even more scarce and resources to develop such potential, if it can be cultivated at all, must be carefully distributed to among a comparatively exclusive group (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Huselid, 2005; Meyers & van Woerkom, 2017). This can be contrasted with a bottom-up

approach in which talent can be developed or grown rather than hunted, implying a wide, easily grown supply rather than a limited and elusive supply of talent (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Lepak & Snell, 1999). Whether grown, hunted, bought or rented, field of talent management-slash-career development exhibits and elicits viewpoints evocative of a wide variety of disciplines ranging from psychology, economics, sociology, education, and more, and is often interdisciplinary in its approach (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000).

Additionally, the practical approaches that are common in industry, despite recurrent themes, belie a wide variety of inconsistent practices and programs (Huang & Tansley, 2012). Though formal academic theory is not prominent, trade journal articles with a less theoretical and more practical tone featuring several best practices are far more common (Evans, 2017). Further, an examination of these types of works reveals several common themes such as strategic, aligned, integrated, and global as common elements (Hunt, 2014; Israelite, 2010; Rothwell, 2012; Stahl et al., 2012).

In light of some agreement on general HR functions for talent management professionals, the idea that if people want to move ahead or go up the corporate ladder, identifying and actively managing talent to match the goals of the organization with the abilities and potential of individuals ought to be of strategic importance (Rothwell, 2012). Indeed, recruiting is often considered the first strategic step in a full-cycle talent management program (Boštjančič & Slana, 2018; Lawler, 2017; Thunnissen & Gallardo-Gallardo, 2017). This continues as a continual process in which aligning the desires of the individual regarding career development, progression, and potential with the needs of the organization's goals is a case of shared priorities and potential mismatch (Schein, 1978). Though there is a natural opportunity for alignment, there is also a potential miss as talent management professionals are often much more focused on

organizational priorities rather a shared or collaborative perspective (Evans, 2017; Lawler, 2017). This concept of "the organized, formalized planned effort to achieve a balance between the individuals career needs and the organization's work-force requirements" is in fact the very definition of "career development" (Leibowitz et al.,1986, p. 4). Though often interchangeable, the literature shows a tendency that talent management is more reflective of the organizational or managerial perspective, while career development and progression is often seen as the individual or customer perspective of these same practices.

Reconciling both an organizational and individual perspective, it may be that the front-line managers who are known to be the mediators of aspects of organizational policy, practice, and culture (Chiaburu & Lim, 2008; Gill, 2008; Kane-Urrabazo, 2006; Whitener et al., 1998) play a "…pivotal role when it comes to conveying messages to employees with regard to their career prospects, holding career conversations that stimulate employees to think about their career values and ambitions, and communicating this information back to HR management" (De Vos & Cambré, 2017, p. 501). Thus, managers are literally caught in the middle of the organization as arbiters of the talent development goals of the organization and the career development goals of the individual.

A Shift in Modern Career Development Approaches

Though organizations provide a wide variety of talent development functions, from the perspective of the individual, these same actions in the form of career development are important to attract more talented individuals, provide increased job satisfaction, retain good employees by reducing turnover, and provide increase organizational effectiveness and financial results (Walton, 2017). No matter the talent management practice or the if the time period is 2020 or

19xx, talent management and career development efforts within an organization strongly reflect both the national culture as well as the specific culture of any given organization (Schein, 1985).

Further developments over time reflected in literature is a shift represented in the protean or boundaryless career that situates the employee as the principal driver of their career over that of the organization (Arthur, 1994; Hall & Moss, 1998). Thus, through this popular view, the individual is viewed as "the primary actor in career management" (De Vos & Cambré, 2017). While not under emphasizing the importance and the context of the organization, the view of individual agency underscores the value of an approach such as SCCT in which self-efficacy figures prominently in development of the theory (Lent & Brown, 2013b). Such understanding is also aligned with current practices in which multiple sources note that where there is a gap between the ambitions and skills that employees want to have or develop, and those that organizations are failing to provide opportunities to learn or practice are a primary reason for strong performers to be searching for their next position, often in another organization, while presently employed (Hamori et al., 2012; MacRae & Furnham, 2014).

Though SCCT emphasizes the individual as agentic, more recent literature on career theory indicates the emergence of the "Chaos Theory" which is built on "four cornerstone constructs: complexity, change, chance, and construction" (Bright & Pryor, 2011, p. 163). It should be noted that Chaos Career Theory does not negate SCCT but, in an era of increasing rapid change and complexity, traditional person – environment fit models are deemed adequate only in a stable environment (Bright & Pryor, 2005). As SCCT evolved from social cognitive theory, it represents both elements of content- and process-factors (Patton & McMahon, 2014) that on a macro level, "appear to have a degree of stability" while on a micro level of any given individual in any given situation at any given moment, "lack predictability" and thus are best

characterized as "chaotic systems" (Bright & Pryor, 2005, pp. 292-293). Such a theory reflects a reality that "70% of a large sample of university students reported that their careers were significantly influenced by unplanned events" (Bright & Pryor, 2005, p. 296), far too large a ratio to have too much faith in behavioral intention, planned career interests and pathways, and even preparation.

Talent Management Practices

Despite this range of theoretical inputs, a survey of 194 organizations in 2000 provides both a number of common programs and practices and, more importantly, a means to frame the variety of practices across the dual continuums of high to low "sophistication" and "involvement" (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000, p. 359). Practices such as job postings or lateral career moves were characterized as low-sophistication and medium involvement and performance appraisals indicated by a moderate sophistication with involvement ranging from low (e.g., self-assessment or career opportunity written materials) to high (e.g., performance review with HR department and supervisor collaboration) (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000). Though these practices were from a two-decades aged research, recent industry reports yield similar though often technology-infused results that can exist within this framework. Common current practices note an ideal starting spot is to capture various job roles, levels, and families as a foundation from which development can be better targeted and aligned with organizational priorities (Werder et al., 2018). Further, practices that invoke various means of assessing and communicating employee performance, potential, and opportunity are exemplified by coaching, mentoring, high potential programs, job rotation, stretch assignments, and other programs are cited as common (Werder et al., 2018). Regardless of the program, Baruch and Peiperl's (2000) taxonomic

framework remains a valid means of conceptualizing the wide variety of practices and represent a range of activities, each inspired or colored by one or more of diverse disciplines.

As talent management can connotate the entire the range of activities in the full hire-to-retire and everything in between, a focus on a few common programs that organizations utilize to develop talent are listed below:

- Stretch Projects – Temporary work strategic assignments that are often at a higher level of authority, scope, or scale from where the employee normally works for the purpose of testing ability or getting exposure to a different part of the organization (Huang & Tansley, 2012; Werder et al., 2018).

- Geographic Mobility or Job Rotation – A work assignment in a different location, often either at a headquarters, major office, or diverse global location to give exposure and possibly assess loyalty or commitment to the organization (Huang & Tansley, 2012; Werder et al., 2018).

- Coaching or Mentoring – Though different types of coaching exist such as executive coaching, team coaching, performance improvement coach depending on the need and target, overall, this method is a resource intensive means to provide awareness, feedback, and ideas to employees as a means of development that is often, but not always, reactive (Roman, 2014). Mentoring is like coaching but is often, but not always, proactive works to create a highly personalized relationship with a junior employee to formalize a means of informal learning and development to an impressionable junior employee (Combs, 2014).

- Education or Certifications– Often the path to advancement is through completion of a formal education program such as a bachelors or graduate degree that the

organization endorses, provides time or funds to subsidize or perhaps communicates opportunities upon completion. (Werder et al., 2018). Similarly, certifications are typically shorter-in-duration and industry-focused means of career development that organizations may subsidize or promote participation (Werder et al., 2018).

- Team or Project Work Assignments – These work assignments are generally a departure or addition to regular work duties in which collaboration, leadership, and other knowledge is gained as a result of participation (Werder et al., 2018).

- Assessments – There are wide variety of assessments from peer-evaluations to formal annual performance review to more in-depth personality, intelligence, skill or other testing to identifying gaps and opportunities for development including high potential programs (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Huselid et al., 2005; Werder et al., 2018)

High Potential Programs

High potential program merit special attention as they are at the intersection of talent management and career development. These programs seem to epitomize several of the aspects of what it means to be ambitious as they focus on making developing the careers of those who have a combination of high performance and, even higher potential for future performance in strategic roles or "A Players" in strategic, value-adding roles (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Huselid et al., 2005; Ruona, 2014). Though organizations almost certainly seek to develop, retain, and promote individuals that show the appropriate combination of performance and potential, so called "hi-po" programs began in earnest as a common talent management function in the 1990's (Schuler et al., 2011).

Employee Turnover

Turnover is the separation of an employee from the employment relationship with a given organization and may be voluntary or involuntary with voluntary separation accounting for 75% of incidents (Mahan et al, 2019). Turnover is a salient part of the full cycle of talent management and represents the endpoint of the employer-employee relations opposite from recruiting and onboardings in the talent lifecycle. Though much of talent professionals work is focused on getting the right candidate in the position, much of this effort may be a consequence of the work of talent management to develop internal candidates for promotion or other opportunities or, potentially the failure of talent management efforts to retain individuals in the organization which is a significant cost to US organizations at $630 billion (Mahan et al, 2019). Despite the high price, most organizations fail to take a proactive or data-backed approach (Allen et al., 2010; Sears et al., 2017).

A noted issue with turnover research is the difference in predictability in moving from larger industry or even larger geographic contexts with data that predicts half or more of turnover despite being able to predict less than 15% of individual variance (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). This is supported by recent research indicating, in most cases, that there is no single profile of turnover or a means to address it at a level above that of a particular organization or location (Mahan et al., 2019; Sears et al., 2017). For example, key drivers of turnover at an organization in one location of a particular industry may not be similar to a different company in the same industry at the same location as the variables are often idiosyncratic to significant extent.

Despite this, on an individual level, Maertz and Griffeth (2004) arrive at eight motivational factors that, at whatever level turnover variables exist, most often play out as the decision by a single individual. These eight motives are an attempt to synthesize drivers of key

predictors such as low job satisfaction, compensation, the fulfillment of or violation of a psychological contract, or other factors that affect the intention or the decision to stay or leave an employer (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004). Regardless of the cause, though there are predictable best practices that emerge across the entire workforce, their implementation must be done in a way that aligns with the specific elements at work and specific constraints present (Mahan et al., 2019; Sears et al., 2017).

The Relevance of Ambition in a Career

Despite the breadth of SCCT and its strong basis on key psychological concepts such as personality and interests, the concept of ambition is largely absent from explicit, single-factor consideration. This is ironic as the "persistent and generalized striving for success, attainment, and accomplishment" are, on the face of it, central to career choices and satisfactory outcomes (Judge & Kammeyer-Miller, 2012, p. 759). Despite not being noted explicitly, it is not unreasonable that the agentic aspect of SCT is highly aligned with personal ambition and drive. Higher levels of ambition would likely be closely correlated with the factor of goal persistence as well as social striving within performance domains to achieve at or above a certain contextual level. Consequently, it would be expected that greater ambition would correlate with greater success though, at exceptionally high levels, there may be evidence of a certain *lack* of satisfaction or, decreasing satisfaction, as they may always be in pursuit of more, higher, or greater achievement. Additionally, as certain careers are better suited to certain trait dispositions or personality types (i.e., extroversion to dealing with people), higher self-reported measures of ambition may likely be associated with occupations that require greater effort or associated with greater prestige or compensation. In the same way that those with *more* ambition might select career pathways requiring more effort or being more likely to be associated with certain levels of

achievement or status, a realization of the potential sacrifices or pitfalls of certain occupational choices could assist in helping individuals to self-select out of certain career pathways that do not align with their level of desired persistence or attainment.

Additionally, it is important to consider career development and related themes (such as ambition) from an organizational perspective. In the recruiting phase of talent management, attracting people with potential is one of the key goals of "having the right talent in the right roles at the right times" of the talent management organization (Silzer & Borman, 2017, p. 88). In consideration of potential, most medium and large organizations have a managed or strategic approach to the identification and development of high-potential employees, even if that is only a smaller segment or group such sales employees or managers (Kotlyar, 2018; Silzer & Borman, 2017; Silzer & Church, 2009).

This identification of potential figures largely in talent management aspect of succession planning which, though it can refer to any position filling activity, generally refers to more senior roles (Boštjančič, & Slana, 2018; Mattone & Xavier, 2013). Despite the seeming importance of this task, only about half of organizations had a defined process and, only 20% utilized objective performance or potential assessing tools or techniques (Mattone & Xavier, 2013). Of those organizations that identify "potential" as a necessary descriptor, there is great variance as to "potential for what" with 35% defining it by role, 25% each by "level" and leadership "breadth" while 10% focus on simply past performance as the best indicator of future potential (Silzer & Church, 2009, p. 10).

While industry has some disagreement as to what exactly constitutes high potential, there is modest agreement regarding a desired prediction of future leadership capability over

current role and performance (Silzer et al., 2016). Though this varies by organization, 10 out of 11 models for the assessment of high-potentials include a variable on some aspect of motivation or a related concept which include verbiage such as ambition, aspiration, drive and other expressions of commonly associated with aspects of the ambition concept (Dries & Pepermans, 2012; Silzer & Borman, 2017; Silzer & Church, 2009). Because of this, themes of ambition are readily present though the characterization of potential. One of the most common tools utilized to characterize potential in the workplace is the nine-box in which the dual axes of an employee's performance and potential are plotted (Dries & Pepermans, 2012; Lee, 2018). It is the factor of potential that causes issues as it is inherently harder to predict or assess than the lagging indicator of performance (Kotlyar, 2018; Silzer & Church, 2009).

Other methods of assessment of potential include personality assessments which either call out ambition as a factor (i.e., Hogan assessments) or it is otherwise baked in as in the case of typical FFM models (Mattone & Xavier, 2013). Additionally, simulations such as Mercer's TalentSim are noted as bona fide means of capturing elements of future performance in a present state as a means of assessing potential (Mattone & Xavier, 2013) while other methods include asking for nominations both by potential high potential candidates as well as by managers (Scott et al., 2010).

Though there are several methods by which one could assess or attempt to assess potential, in conjunction with the various issues noted, 50% of HR professional "lack confidence" in high potential programs (Burke et al., 2014, p. 3). This harkens back to the business cliché attributed to John Wannamaker in which he stated, "Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is, I don't know which half" (Bradt, 2016) in that

organizations, for the most part, despite a potentially significant allocation of resources and abundant effort do not have a consistent means to identify who has potential (Silzer & Church, 2009). In summary, this is not to say that such a system does not exist and that many corporations do have a system of identifying talent potential, only that there is no one agreed upon means that is touted to produce consistent results that industry professional can agree.

Assessing Ambition, Determining Potential

Though ambition is embedded in the assessment of potential, it is obscured within the broader concept of motivation (Silzer & Borman, 2017; Silzer & Church, 2009) or personality (Jones et al., 2016). However, the salience of ambition is evident by career progression and development throughout the lifespan (Heckhausen, et al., 2017). Yet, despite the common presence of ambition (Judge & Kammeyer-Miller, 2012; Jones et al., 2017; Siegling & Petrides, 2016; Wilcox, 2013) as a career-relevant concept, especially in achievement-oriented modern western cultures, it would seem that the concept has been significantly overlooked as evidenced by only 232 peer-reviewed articles in which ambition is noted in the title or as a keyword in the PsycINFO database (compared with 29,000+ for "motivation" or nearly 26,000 for "intelligence") in April of 2018.

There are a few accessible-via-the-internet assessments that include some measure ambition, most often as a facet of personality. However, instruments that have some noted authority accompanying them are quite few and, of those, the Hogan Personality Inventory (HPI) from Hogan Assessments is likely the most prominent as it specifically calls out "ambition" as a factor related to the "desire for status, power, recognition and achievement (Hogan & Hogan, 2007, p 15). The commercial success of Hogan Assessments can be noted by their use in "75%

of the Fortune 500" (Hogan Assessments, 2020, p. 1) as well as their substantial investment of $15M in a new headquarters office building (Evatt, 2014).

The HPI aligns with Hogan's socioanalytic theory as the seven factors both evolved from dominant trait-based five-factor models and aligns with biological drives of getting along and getting ahead with specific vocational application (Hogan & Hogan, 2007). The HPI scales are specifically aligned to each factor to provide feedback to individuals on their "personality-based strengths", one of which is ambition (Hogan Assessments, 2019, p. 2). Ambition is specifically noted as a factor in recognition of the observable phenomena of "shy people who are ambitious" and "sociable people who are lazy" (Hogan & Hogan, 2007, p.15). Thus, the five-factor trait extraversion was overly inclusive and less useful prior to this split (Hogan & Holland, 2003). The ambition subscale queries respondents with self-rating items on six aspects of the ambition concept: competitiveness, self-confidence, accomplishment, leadership, identity, and social anxiety (Hogan Assessments, 2019). This analysis reconciles with a pragmatic approach noted by Hogan (1982) to underscore the HPI assessment as intended for the workplace with over 156,000 individuals representative of the entire US workforce (Hogan & Hogan, 2007).

An alternative assessment which does not seem to have widespread commercial use at the time of writing is Field's Workplace Ambition Assessment (WAM) (2002). During the development of the WAM instrument, five practical and distinctive themes emerged that are useful in characterizing the concept of ambition in career development (Field, 2002). A multifaceted view of ambition is deemed particularly advantageous as, in the context of organizations, managers who acknowledge multiple interpretations of ambition tend to not make assumptions about ambition from a single narrow view such as hours worked, availability, or other factors thus enabling employee agency to advance (Benschop et al., 2013). To elaborate

from a psychological perspective, Field conducted an analysis of instruments purporting to measure more psychologically defined constructs of ambition in the development of the WAM. These themes representing the one concept have five subscale items consisting of: "1) personal aspirations, 2) active and expressive engagement, 3) reliance on competitive and other external indicators for self-evaluation, 4) perseverance, 5) the degree of personal investment" (Field, 2002, p. 69). The five themes of the WAM were be utilized as the basis of a working definition of the ambition concept for this study that reflects and captures its true multifaceted expression across literature focusing on the expression of ambition in the workplace.

Summary

In summary, achievement and motivation are established related concepts relevant in the workplace. Achievement-orientation is more narrowly focused than ambition (McClelland, 1987; McClelland, 1961) and "motivation" is often incorrectly substituted for "ambition" as it represents more the direction or level and less the underlying rationale (McClelland, 1987; Siegling & Petrides, 2016). Also related are concepts of self-determination and self-efficacy as elements underlying ambitious actions or behaviors (Sweet, Fortier, Strachan, & Blanchard, 2012). Thus, like the psychological construct of personality, these elements t are relevant in the expression of ambition. Yet, ambition is *not* personality though it could be alternatively dis-entangled from the common five-factor model (Jones et al., 2017) or, alternatively, treated separately as a "middle-level" construct (Judge & Kammeyer-Miller, 2012). As this study seeks to understand the value of ambition in the workplace, Chaos Career Theory (Bright & Pryor, 2003) could be seen as an extension of Lent's Social Cognitive Career Theory in complex, rapidly changing environments to provide an adequate understanding of the desires, intentions, and actions of the individual (Lent, 2013) as well as the actions of the organizational

professionals charges with executing the strategies of the organization against the talents and resources available (Chambers et al, 1998; Schuler, 2015; Thunnissen & Gallardo-Gallardo, 2017). Though there are a variety of talent management practices (Huang & Tansley, 2012), the concept of high potential programs (Collings & Mellahi, 2009) is especially aligned with the understanding the value of ambition in the workplace and perhaps the greatest contribution this or subsequent research might contribute is a partial solution to the costly problem of turner, both form a organizational and an individual perspective. Finally, Field's Workplace Ambition Measure (2002) provides the multifaceted definition of the ambition concept necessary as a starting place from which to begin to assess its value in the workplace.

Chapter 3: Methods

The purpose of this chapter is to present the overarching philosophical approach that guided the methods by which the research question of understanding the value of ambition in the workplace was implemented in this research. In addition, this chapter will present information regarding participant selection and data gathering and interpretation processes and methods.

Given that it is unclear if or how ambition is valued in the workplace, the use of the philosophical tradition of the social constructivist lens is relevant as the research takes the perspective that the value of ambition, if any, will be substantially evaluated by its social and cultural relevance. Further, key theoretical underpinnings such as self-efficacy are solidly rooted in the constructivist perspective (Bandura, 1977). To gather data on the experiences of individuals in the workplace, the use of semi-structured interviews is an approach that is aligned with this philosophical approach (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013).

As such, this study utilized a qualitative research design in which 16 individuals were interviewed regarding their thoughts on the value of ambition in the workplace. To reach this sample, an "invitation to participate" letter from Dr. Michael Moore (see Appendix C) was sent to 212 business degree program students who had attended within the previous 18 weeks as of January 2021. The email from Dr. Moore to potential participant served the necessary purpose of sanctioning the work via an implicit organizational endorsement. Such a step on behalf of an organizational emissary is typically needed to bypass junk mail filters and to ensure thoughtful consideration. Only a comparatively small sample size was needed, as multiple sources indicate a high likelihood of "code saturation" occurring within a range of 12 to 15 participants (Guest, 2006; Hennink et al., 2017; Rijnsoever, 2017). All those who indicated interest by clicking on an embedded link in the email were directed to survey that included a study description, a consent

to participate form (see Appendix A) as well as basic screening questions (see Appendix F) and the WAM (see Appendix G).

Field's Workplace Ambition Measure (WAM) (2002) was including to better acquaint participants with the concept of ambition and was administered via electronic means prior to the scheduled interview as part of the preparticipation materials. For those that are willing to participate, the interview will review results of the WAM (2002) assessment and contain questions to seek input on their perceived utility of ambition in the workplace from both a managerial and organizational perspective. Interviews were conducted remotely and recorded electronically with the researcher taking notes during the interview process to facilitate a thematic analysis following transcription and comparison (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013).

Participants

Participants were selected that had at least two years of fulltime work experience to provide enough insight and perspective on their career and those proximal to them to have useful perspectives on the value of ambition in the workplace. Two years of experience is cited as the top end of the "time-to-optimal productivity" range by 75% of organizations (Oakes, 2012). Additionally, individuals were selected who had experience managing those who are between 30 to 50 years old. This range was selected on the basis that these individuals have stable personalities (Damian et al., 2019), a sufficiently developed career perspective, as well as an awareness of circumstance to make informed estimates of their potential in the workplace (Axelrod, 1999; Field, 2002). Further, they have likely not reached peak earning capacity (Perez, 2019) and have had sufficient time for their choices and actions to meaningfully impact career vectors and velocity prior to peak earnings, terminal organizational position, or retirement.

The selected individuals reflected multiple industries and organizations and thus multiple viewpoints on the concept of ambition in the workplace serve to enhance overall applicability, an element of validity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). As ambition is posited to exist as a broad, universal concept (Hogan & Holland, 2003; Tracy et al., 2015, 3:30), representation from multiple organizations should not necessarily hinder the achievement of code saturation (Guest, 2006; Hennink et al., 2017; Rijnsoever, 2017). To access potential participants, the Chief Academic Officer of the University of Arkansas who also serves as the chief administrator for eVersity, University of Arkansas System's low-cost, online bachelor's degree program for working adults was contacted for permission to solicit participation from their student population for business degree programs. Though this population represents one that is convenient to the researcher, it should not be viewed as a "convenience sample" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 98) as it represents the targeted or purposeful sampling of "theory-based sampling" (Patton, 2002, p. 238; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, pp. 314-315) as this population is compromised almost exclusively of working adults who are exhibiting behavioral elements of the ambition concept due to their educational and career aspirations. Additionally, an approximate 50/50 gender identity was a targeted measure to allow for the possibility of differential expression or perception of the value of workplace ambition based upon the gender.

Informed Consent Procedures

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (see Appendix A) was obtained prior to any contact with potential participants. Potential interviewees who completed the initial request for information and IRB informed consent were then followed up via email with a brief description of the research with the true statement of purpose, "to understand the value of assessing ambition in the workplace", as well as a link to schedule a time for interview via the

Calendly application. Once scheduled, interviews were conducted at the designated time and began with an additional high-level review which noted, 1) the session was being recorded, 2) they could stop at any time for any reason, and 3) asking if they had any questions regarding their participation. Once these items were address, the structured interview began.

Individuals were recruited to participate via an email from Dr. Moore which contained a brief description of the undertaking, informed that there would be no consequences for opting in or out, and those who were willing were asked to provide contact information and given additional information as well as the IRB-approved initial consent to participate form. It was assumed that not all potential participants would be able to participate in light of work demands, schedule conflicts, or they may simply not be interested once they learned more. The first 16 that respondent affirmatively for participation and scheduling were selected with the only researcher induced bias of working to achieve balanced participation in the overall study with regard to gender, as the opportunity to balance participation incidentally arose. Though the first announcement of the study generated rapid responses, it was insufficient to reach the minimum initial desired range of 12-15 participants so a second, reminder invitation was sent by Dr. Moore which yielded more than a sufficient number of candidates with 16 qualified participants responding and completing pre-interview materials.

It was noted that in the published results, subjects will be identified only by a number and the participating organization will only be represented by industry type aligned with standard North American Industry Classification (NAICS) coding system (US Census, 2020) in the most generic of terms to convey relevant context. Also, all subjects were adults, no deception was present, participation consent forms (see Appendix A) for recording the interviews were utilized, and no adverse health, occupational, or other risks of participation were likely. Consent for the

use of the WAM was secured by the written permission of Dr. Cynthia Field (see Appendix B). In the wake of the global COVID19 pandemic, interviews were conducted remotely by Microsoft Teams remote videoconference and recording application with a concise review of the informed consent also recorded at the onset of the interview. Additionally, transcripts were provided to all participants for approval and as a means of validation via member checking (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013) with eleven of the sixteen participants responding affirmatively and the remainder giving no response.

Measures

Data gathered consisted of a pre-participation questionnaire (see Appendix F, p. 129) with a basic demographic profile including age, years of work experience, years of managerial experience, education, gender identification, organizational tenure, and number of individuals presently supervised. Also, measures from the WAM (Field, 2002) were utilized by participants (see Appendix G). All interviews were be recorded electronically and will be maintained by the author for a period of at least three years according to US Department Health & Human Services guidelines (45 CFR 46.115) which form the basis for Institutional Review Board Policies (HHS.gov, 2018; University of Arkansas, 2019). Storage of data will be on the author's password-protected personal computer as well as on a secure, University of Arkansas provided cloud-based storage platform. Interviews will be conducted electronically as in-person interviews are not feasible considering the global pandemic.

Research Design

The research design is qualitative with the specific techniques utilized being an assessment and a structured interview technique as specific questions will be posed though, the responses may be "followed" to allow for adequate inquiry and revelation when an additional

probe or prompt is given (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Philosophically, the research was conducted from a constructivist approach as the knowledge of that meaning will be elucidated through the experiences of the individual (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). The constructivist approach is deemed to be a "central characteristic of all qualitative research as individuals construct reality in interaction" (Meriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 24). This approach aligns well with the foundations of social cognitive theory as the power of the situation is a key determinant of behavior (Bandura, 2001). As a result of both the lack of research on the topic of the value of ambition in the workplace and the reliance on social-cognitive psychology, a qualitative approach is warranted. This process is likely generate to a convergence or saturation of thematic elements sufficient to generate an informed finding on the meaning and utility of ambition in the workplace (Meriam & Tisdell, 2015). Given this approach, aside from the indication that the topic of the study was ambition in the workplace, each participant was told that a debrief would occur at the end of the interview as the researcher did not want to give any information which would color the participant's lived experience. This note was recorded along with indications that the interviewee could cease participation at any time for any reason though the debrief following the interview was not recorded.

For qualitative interviews, there are no hard boundaries on the number of questions or the duration of the interview, however, following the boundaries imposed by the pragmatic approach, using as few questions as possible in the minimal amount of time should be the desired outcome. A recommendation is that face-to-face interviews generally not exceed a "…set of ten to twelve semi-structured questions… lasting about an hour" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 369). Based on the author's experience with interviewing and discussing this topic in previous unpublished work, targeting 30 minutes per interviewee was a reasonable goal that was predicted

to be well received by interviewees and would still be under the guidance of 60 minutes should the interview last longer than expected.

The research questions were designed with the intent to assure a shared understanding of the concept prior to probing into the perceived utility of ambition to facilitate elicitation of key information. Familiarity and a deeper structure for the multifaceted concept of ambition will be derived from the review of the WAM (2002) assessment. Subsequent questions were designed to evoke dominant themes of ambition of these experienced employees in the context of their own perspective in the workplace.

Interview Questions

Section I – This section was intended to create a shared understanding of the ambition concept.

1. Review of the pre-interview WAM (2002) assessment noting the five themes, 1) personal aspirations, 2) active and expressive engagement, 3) reliance on competitive and other external indicators for self-evaluation, 4) perseverance, 5) the degree of personal investment (Field, 2002, p. 69)

2. Based on this information, how has your view of ambition in in the workplace changed?

3. Based on the WAM, to what extent do you think that adequately captures how you think about ambition?

Section II – This section was intended to evaluate the perceived utility of ambition in the workplace from the perspective of the employee with regard to both process and outcome.

1. As you developed professionally, how was your own ambition a factor in that?

2. To what extent, if any, was your ambition a factor that your supervisor or management in your organization considered? How?

3. From your view, how important is it to consider ambition as a factor in any of the areas of talent selection or acquisition, development, or performance management? Why or why not?

4. How would things be different or what would it be like if your supervisor or organizational management valued ambition more?

Section III – This section was intended to evaluate the perceived utility of ambition in the workplace from the perspective of one who manages others from the perspective of both processes and outcomes.

1. As you manage others, to what extent do you value or consider their ambition? How?

2. How is ambition valued in your organization?

3. How important is it to consider ambition as a factor in any of the areas of talent selection or acquisition, development, or performance management?

4. How important do you think the consideration of ambition is to desirable organizational outcomes such as engagement, productivity, retention?

5. How would things be different or what would it be like if you valued ambition more for employee you supervise?

Procedures

As the workplace is not a single homogenous setting, purposeful theoretical sampling will be utilized that is directed to a single group that represents multiple employers to establish a potential convergence of themes (Patton, 2002). The selection of participants was via purposeful sampling due to shared institutional membership characteristic as well as accessibility by the author. As experienced workers, participants will likely have characteristics which are representative of both a given industry as well as generalized experience to be able to express

nuanced and informed views on the topic of ambition in the workplace. Participants with two years of fulltime employment experience would allow sustained exposure to themes of ambition in the workplace and be able to provide insight. Two years of experience is cited as the top end of the "time-to-optimal productivity" range by 75% of organizations (Oakes, 2012). Given the desired age range of interviewees as being from 30 to 50, two years of experience should not present a significant barrier to participation. This range was also used to constitute sufficient experience from an employee perspective as well.

Despite there being "no rules for sample size in qualitative research" as a single "case" can provide meaning and utility, for major theme detection, it is necessary to achieve "saturation" (Patton, 2002, p. 244). Saturation occurs when enough sampling has occurred so that redundancy of themes, if a pattern were to be present, would likely occur (Galvin, 2015; Patton, 2002; Rijnsoever, 2017). For the technique of semi-structured interviews, an acceptable range for homogenous groups is six to 30 with "good consistency" as indicated by a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.7 or higher reached at 12 participants based on the analysis of one "typical" qualitative interview study (Galvin, 2015). These data align well with Hennink et al., (2017) which indicate code saturation occurring at nine participants and Guest, et.al. (2006) finding that redundancy occurs by the 14th interview. In light of all these inputs, a sample of 16 individuals was determined sufficient to both detect themes and patterns in both the ubiquity of the concept as well as be likely to pick up on theme variations that would suggest further research. This sample size was selected as first, it represented a number slightly greater than the minimum quantity needed to assure data sufficiency and completeness and secondly, as a matter of convenience as 16 willing-to-participate individuals who met the criteria for inclusion responded promptly to the solicitation for participation.

Following a positive response to the invitation to participate announcement, potential subjects were contacted via email with a brief overview of the research, a pre-participation participant questionnaire that included the WAM (2002) that will be delivered electronically via the Qualtrics survey platform as a means to introduce and familiarize participants with the multifaceted concept of ambition in the workplace. Additionally, this electronic communication included the IRB approved consent to participate for the potential participant to complete. The pre-interview questionnaire solicits basic information such as name and demographics including age and managerial experience. Once the pre-interview questionnaire and WAM (2002) are completed, the individuals were sent a link utilizing the Calendly scheduling application to schedule a 30-minute Microsoft Teams facilitated meeting.

While face-to-face interviews are often considered ideal in order to capture non-verbal cues or provide additional meaning (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013), in the wake of the current global COVID 19 pandemic (World Health Organization, 2020), a suitable web-enabled teleconference solution that provides both audio and video options is widely deemed to be an adequate alternative in most cases to face-to-face interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). The Microsoft Teams application was deemed to be the most viable option and allow the interviews to be simultaneously recorded and most importantly, presented no-risk to participants.

The interviews began with a very short introduction consisting of 1) an appreciation for their participation thus far, 2) indicating the session was being recorded, 3) noting that they may cease participation at any time for any reason and, 4) as the topic was focused on their experience of ambition in the workplace, a debriefing would occur at the end during as the researcher did not want to influence their views. At this point, the interview began with the

introductory questions in Section I which included a brief review of their WAM results and the

multifaceted concept of ambition. Following this, all interview questions (see Interview

Questions) were asked in the order listed for all participants. All results were be transcribed and

analyzed using classical and thematic content analysis (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). During the

interviews, notes were taken to both capture and highlight emerging data observations deemed as

particularly interesting or salient as well as to capture other aspects that might not have been as

effectively rendered by an audio transcript.

Data Analysis

All results were be transcribed and analyzed using classical and thematic content analysis

(Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Though the findings will be "coded", it is important to note that

"coding" is "…nothing more than assigning some sort of shorthand designation to various

aspects of your data so you can easily retrieve specific pieces" (Merriam & Tisdale, p. 199). As

each transcript was reviewed for each question, themes or other key findings were summarized

as a "code" consisting of either specific pithy or apt quotes from respondents or "word or short

phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, or essence capturing, and/or evocative

attribute for… data" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 3) and then distilled from multiple words or sentences

into the smallest possible space that still retains distinctive interpretation or meaning. This

inductive analysis (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013) was conducted digitally using a spreadsheet

table array as a parallel to the classic analog "tabletop" process by which codes and themes are

physically arranged and analyzed for patterns and themes (Saldaña, 2016, p. 230). Once captured

in this atomic form in the spreadsheet cell, results for each question were iteratively sorted to

"…identifying themes, categories, patterns, or answers to your research questions" (Merriam &

Tisdale, p. 216). After this vertical sorting by question, these data were examined horizontally as

each participant's coded response exist as a row in the spreadsheet. The review of this data occurred by the elicitation of themes principally by structural and concept first cycling coding methods (Saldaña, 2016) as participant responses were generally straightforward and deemed to be not particularly complex or having veiled meaning or intent.

Basic descriptive statistics including age, sex, race, work experience, organizational tenure, education, years of managerial experience were compiled to provide demographic information from which overall patterns as well as patterns or trends by demographic or other factor (i.e., variance by industry, etc.) were examined for variant and recurrent codes by a second cycle pattern coding method (Saldaña, 2016).

To ensure validity, both methodological and interpretive controls were utilized (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Method-wise, the same process of a semi-structured interview with scripted questions, was followed for each participant. To help ensure interpretive validity, key themes were examined both horizontally across all participants for each question and vertically as each participant is treated as a single case from which dominant and recurrent themes might emerge. In addition, the dissertation advisor reviewed transcripts and summary data by peer examination to audit the primary researcher's findings (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013).

For internal validity, though qualitative research interpretation is fallible, the use of straightforward questions with overlapping and similar themes and the pursuit of seeking both managerial and employee perspectives on the value of ambition serve as a means of internal integrity check by means of "triangulation" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 244). To increase the reliability of findings, respondents were informed that no deception was present and that it is their experience which is relevant. Further, it was noted in consent materials that there are "no direct benefits are associated with this research" (Informed Consent document, Appendix A).

Each of these elements work to reduce participant motivation to provide responses that serve a purpose aside from an attempt to learn more about the lived experience of ambition in the workplace. Additionally, following each interview, the recording was stopped and the researcher reviewed the motivation for the study as well as provided additional context through conversation which created ample additional opportunity to consider the overall process and outcomes as consistent and address potential misunderstanding or misinterpretation through further contextual triangulation. These post-interview conversations with participants represent a means of working to ensure "adequate engagement in data collection" as "strategies for promoting validity and reliability" in the sometimes less clearly defined practice of the qualitative research process (Merriam & Tisdale, p. 246).

Finally, as a form of "respondent validation" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 246), each participant was emailed their verbatim transcript for the opportunity to review and remedy potential errors. This strategy for ensuring internal validity is labeled, "…the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say… and the perspective they have… as well as being an important way of identifying your own biases and misunderstanding" (Maxwell, 2013, pp. 126-7). Despite all the rigor toward limiting bias, one reasonable question that would be suitable for future research if an inquiry that notes the topic of ambition creates a situation in which more ambitious subjects are more likely to respond and participate. If so, such as sample would perhaps induce self-serving biases. To reduce or eliminate this bias, it would be necessary to compel participation from those who might otherwise opt out of participation. For this inquiry, such a measure is out of scope though for future research, having a better understanding of baseline ambition averages and range would

be important steps that merit exploration that could have important consequences for many practical and research applications.

Summary

In summary, 16 individuals between the ages of 30 and 50 who are students in University of Arkansas eVersity program that had both two years or more of managerial experience representing a variety of industries and balanced gender mix opted to participate in recorded interviews on that sought the perspective of their lived experience of the value of ambition in the workplace. In light of both the distrusted location of participants as well as the ongoing COVID19 global pandemic, all interviews were conducted remotely. A variety of means including member checking, peer review, statements that noted "no deception" and "no benefit", as well as post-interview participant engagement were utilized to increase the validity and reliability of participant statements.

Chapter 4: Results

When there is a difference between the apparent reality of a situation and what one believes, when there is a seeming contradiction, the admonition to "check your premises" (Rand, 1957, p. 199) is good advisement. Such is the inspiration behind these interviews which attempt to reconcile the stated business necessity (Wilcox, 2013) of ambition with the noted lack of research on the topic (Jones, et al., 2017; Judge & Kammeyer-Miller, 2012; Siegling et al., 2019; Siegling & Petrides, 2016). Overall, the findings do not reconcile this apparent contradiction though there is strong endorsement of the value of ambition in the workplace from both a managerial and employee perspective as well as several insights and potential cautions with this important concept.

Demographics of Participants

A total of 16 working adults between the ages of 30 and 50 representing various industries and each having managerial experience were interviewed via recorded video in which they were asked twelve questions. A tabular summary of this data is presented in Table 5 (Age & Gender); Table 6 (Summary of Work Experience); and Table 7 (Summary of Participant Industries).

Table 5
Summary of Participant Age and Gender

Age	Years	Gender	Response
Average	41.7	Male	6
Std Dev	4.1	Female	9
		Gender variant/Non-conforming	1
			16

Table 6

Summary of Participant Work and Managerial Experience

Work Experience	Years	Managerial Experience	Years
Average	22.9	Average	9.7
Std Dev	5.8	Std Dev	5.6

Table 7

Summary of Participant Industries Represented

Industries Represented	Response
Healthcare	8
Something else not listed above	2
Education Services	1
Utilities	1
Information Technology	1
Manufacturing	1
Retail	1
Transportation/Warehousing	1

Though a wide diversity of industries is represented, healthcare is certainly disproportionately present with half of the participants being in this single industry. Despite this, one consideration is that healthcare, like many other industries, should likely not be viewed as a homogenous entity as there are a wide range of roles present including administrative, information technology, as well as roles more typically associated with the industry label in direct patient care. Though not captured in the participant survey, interviews did reveal a wider perspective than one might initially think given half of all participants indicated employment in this field. Further, of the eight participants, three were males and five identified as female representing additional diversity within the healthcare industry.

Finally, in terms of race, thirteen of the sixteen participants self-identified as "White – Non-Hispanic", one as "White – Hispanic or Latino", and two indicating "Prefer not to disclose".

Interview Protocol

Interviews were conducted and recorded via Microsoft Teams and later transcribed automatically by Trint, an artificial intelligence drive transcription service (trint.com, 2021). Trint-coded transcripts were then manually reviewed and corrected and sent to each participant as a means of validating content and transcription details with eleven of the sixteen opting to respond and only one interviewee indicating a single correction needed in which a name was auto-filled incorrectly.

Each interview followed a structured format, deviating as necessary to address any issues, rephrase or reword questions, and occasionally, when needed, to probe to ensure the question was addressed or to seek clarification. Each interview began with "housekeeping" details including noting that 1) the interview was being recorded electronically, 2) the participant could cease participation at any time for any reason, 3) the interviewer would also be taking notes, and that, 4) time would be allowed at the end to answer additional questions or provide insight into the topic or the rationale behind the researcher's interest in ambition in the workplace. The last item was deemed especially important as, given the constructivist nature of the inquiry, getting the uncolored views of the participants was deemed a priority and the researcher expressly sought to minimize the ingestion of bias into the process by putting forth his own beliefs or experience into the interview process. Consequently, recordings were stopped after the participants indicated they had no questions or additional input to maintain smaller file sizes for the researcher to work with and less extraneous material.

Participant Demographics & Interview Summary Data

The recorded interviews ranged from 13:39 to just under 50 minutes with an average of 24:37 (see Table 8), generally within the 30-minute targeted range and all under the more generous one-hour recommendation (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Interviews that ran short were attributed simply to interviews that were more concise in their responses while interviews that ran longer are attributed to those with more to say, those who asked clarifying questions, or simply provided additional information. Additionally, as noted previously, recording was terminated following the last question and notification to the participant at which time an informal conversation occurred for the purpose of communicating the motivation of the researcher. Though not recorded or considered part of the timed interview, these post-interview conversations typically lasted a few minutes and served the further purpose of allowing the researcher and participant to deepen engagement and provide additional context on the topic as well as the research process.

Table 8
Summary of Interview Duration

Description	Time (minutes: seconds)
Average Interview Length	24:37
Minimum Value	13:39
Maximum Value	49:40
Median	23:16
Standard Deviation	9:04

Results of Interviews

The purpose of this qualitative research was to explore the following research questions by first establishing a shared understanding of a multifaceted concept of ambition and then exploring the following research questions:

1. Based on the WAM (Field, 2002), is ambition valued in the workplace from the view of the employee?

2. Based on the WAM (Field, 2002), is ambition valued in the workplace from the perspective of managers and supervisors?

Considering the noted lack of research on a seemingly common and potentially impactful facet of the employee experience, the purpose of the research was to bring additional insight to the value (or lack thereof) of ambition in the workplace from the perspective of the lived experiences of individuals who possess both an employee- and a managerial-perspective. On the pages following, key findings are summarized by interview question (presented in italics) first and then, when findings warrant, by second cycle patterns (Saldaña, 2016) of various demographic information collected in the pre-participation questionnaire.

Ambition, A Multi-faceted Concept

Section I – This section was intended to create a shared understanding of the ambition concept.

1) Review of the pre-interview WAM (2002) assessment presentation of the multifaceted ambition concept (Field, 2002, p. 69). *Based on this, do you have any questions about the WAM or the idea of a multifaceted concept of ambition?*

Perhaps the least revelational of all findings, 100% of participants indicated "no questions" after reviewing the WAM and discussing the idea of a multi-faceted concept of ambition. Without exception, each participant accepted the idea that ambition should not have a singular focus. This "question" was introduced by telling participants that the purpose of the WAM assessment was not to score or rank them but only to familiarize them with the idea that ambition is not solely focused on perhaps more well-known achievement or competitive aspects but

encompassed aspirations, engagement, perseverance, and personal investment aspects as well (Field, 2002). Despite the intention being to inform rather than question, it was nonetheless surprising that universally, participants accepted this though, it should be noted, two participants (Respondents 4 and 8) were interested in their score and its meaning in terms of scoring high or low. For these participants, additional insight into the scoring was given including reverse scored items with messaging reinforcing the idea of intent to familiarize them with a multifaceted concept rather than ranking.

2) *Based on this information, how has your view of ambition in in the workplace changed?*

Twelve respondents indicated no change in how they considered ambition in the workplace based on the multifaceted ambition concept review. Of the remaining four, two noted that it induced introspection of aspects of ambition (Respondent 3 and 4) and one that it "piqued curiosity" (Respondent 12, 2021, 2:36). Noteworthy as the theme of situation-based influences on the expression of ambition will arise as a key theme later, two respondents noted potential situational impacts (Respondents 1 and 10). Of particular note, Respondent 1 indicated the potential impact of situation influences in this extended excerpt (2021, 1:55):

> And I hadn't really thought about my own personal ambition for a while, to be completely honest. But one of the things that I did think about is, you know, in my current organization, at my current company, I don't have a lot of ambition to move up. I do have a lot of ambition to be successful, to do my best, to meet my goals, exceed my goals. But when it comes to wanting to move up within the company, my company is in a tough spot right now. We were just acquired by another company. We're going through a lot of changes, a lot of transition, a lot of integration. And so for me, it just feels like the wrong time to want to move up within the company. But I still have that ambition to still get my job done, help out my peers, help out my manager. So, it was interesting that I hadn't really thought about that before. But, you know, if I was at a different company or at this company three years ago, my answer might have been different because we might have been in a different environment where it felt easier to obtain. Not that it needs to be easy, but it's just… it just doesn't feel like the right time right now.

Following the debrief at the end of the recorded interview, the idea of the combined stresses at her organization in conjunction with the stresses resulting from the ongoing COVID19 global pandemic was noted as likely situational attenuators to the expression of ambition in the workplace.

3) *Based on the WAM, to what extent do you think that adequately captures how you think about ambition?*

All respondents were in agreement with four respondents (2, 5, 10, and 12) specifically noting or having introspective thoughts and two participants noted particular situational influences. Specifically, regarding situational influences, Respondent 6 indicated a strong belief in cultural attenuation or shaping of some elements of the expression of ambition while Respondent 11 noted the potential salience of gender in the expression of ambition it the workplace. As this was speculated to be a potential influence, her apt response is presented below (2021, 3:19):

> …I don't know that it categorized some of the negative connotations that come with ambition sometimes, you know. And maybe that's just because I'm a woman. A lot of times when a woman is ambitious, it's not exactly smiled upon… it can be frowned upon depending on how she presents...

The Employee Perspective of the Value of Ambition

Section II – This section was intended to evaluate the perceived utility of ambition in the workplace from the perspective of the employee.

4) *As you developed professionally, how was your own ambition a factor in that?*

Without exception, 100% of respondents indicated that their ambition was a positive factor in their own professional development with eight (8) indicating some superlative phrasing in their response (i.e., "huge" or "110%"). Three of the sixteen noted a "nuanced" view in which their

endorsement of ambition as a positive factor was tempered by some other factor, other situational in nature such as a proximal manager that sought to keep employees "in their place" (Respondent 7, 2021, 11:09).

Worth noting is that two participants utilized the word, "drive" in their narration, a parallel to the Siegling and Petrides articles featuring the same lexicon which aligned this phrasing with the ambition concept and differentiated it from the oft conflated word, "motivation" (Siegling & Petrides 2019; Siegling & Petrides, 2016). Additionally, two participants utilized strong forward motion-oriented phrasing in their narration when one noted, "ambition propels performance" (Respondent 7, 2021, 4:21) and that ambition can "catapult" career progression (Respondent 12, 2021, 3:39).

5) *To what extent, if any, was your ambition a factor that your supervisor or management in your organization considered? How?*

In regard to how ambition was recognized from the employee perspective, respondents were nearly equally split between what might be considered to be "explicit primary", signifying or implying a direct causal link between the recognition of ambition and selection or career advancement and "explicit other" themes in which ambition was expressly valued but indirectly or as part of a more comprehensive array of factors. These codes were assigned based on the specific details and overall characterization of participant responses to this query and seem to capture all sentiment expressed with the exception of those that are labeled "negative or mixed". In these cases, a non-positive valuation of the concept was presented or one in which there was a nuanced or otherwise limited positive perspective presented by the respondent. In Table 9, examples of each of these are given to provide elaboration on the meaning of what each "looked like" in the workplace.

Table 9

Summary of Coded Excerpts for Management's Recognition of Ambition

Thematic Description	Example Interview Excerpts	Frequency
Explicit Primary	"Extremely important" and credits it with getting him is present role (2021, Respondent 4,19:19); "Yes, my supervisor recognized me as a go getter and a self-starter" (Respondent 10, 2021, 9:57) or similar.	7
Explicit Other	These are situations where ambition is recognized positively though not to the extent that it was deemed solely responsible for role selection or is positive recognition but not to the extent or with the endorsement that it was solely (or nearly so) a factor or accompanied by a narrative in which its recognition was focused or nuanced.	8
Negative or Mixed	Included in this characterization is the one "negative" recognition of ambition by a manager that, "wants us always to remember our place" (Respondent 2, 2021, 11:09) and one situation in which conflict was initially present due to perceived competitive pressures (Respondent 13, 2021, 6:22).	2

6) *From your view, how important is it to consider ambition as a factor in any of the areas of talent selection or acquisition, development, or performance management? Why or why not?*

Universally, all respondents expressed positive belief that ambition is a factor in one or more areas of talent management with several (five) noting a superlative response and three noting a qualification or nuance in their response such as it being role- or situation-based (two) and one noting it is "important to a point" (Respondent 6, 2021, 27:30). Example of such "superlative responses" include, "It's very important actually. I ask every one of my applicants what their ambitions are ... I need people who are hungry" (Respondent 11, 2021, 8:40); "hugely important… I want people to learn and to want to learn and grow" (Respondent 2, 2021, 12:49); "absolutely key" (Respondent 10, 2021, 2:27); and, perhaps most aptly of all, Respondent 1 (2021, 8:17):

Anyone can have marketable skills, anyone can have talents, anyone can have a degree. Anyone can have, you know, knowledge of a certain software product. But if they don't have the ambition to actually get out there and do the job, get it done, you know, get it done well, get it done by the time it needs to be done, then they're not going to be successful...

7) *How would things be different or what would it be like if your supervisor or organizational management valued ambition more?*

This is a particularly interesting question in that it queries a potential end-state by pushing respondents amplify the behaviors or outcomes of ambition in the workplace which brings insight and potential clarity to its value. In response to this query, only one participant noted a negative outcome (Respondent 6). Upon further probing, it was discovered that this respondent distinguished between their own ambition and that of the manager noting, "it would be… a downfall" (2021, 31:13). This is particularly insightful as, to some extent, it reflects the comments of Respondent 7 in a previous question noting the importance of the manager in being willing to consider or advance the ambitions of employees over their own egoistic ambitions to "keep people in their place" (Respondent 7, 2021, 11:09).

Rather, the overwhelming majority of respondents (13) noted many elements of increased communication, employee engagement, recognition, development, and other positive outcomes while three participants indicated an "unsure" response further revealing that it was already highly valued (Respondents 10, 13, and 14).

A Managerial Perspective on Ambition

Section III – This section was intended to evaluate the perceived utility of ambition in the workplace from the perspective of one who manages others.

8) *As you manage others, to what extent do you value or consider their ambition? How?*

Unanimously, all 16 participants noted they valued ambition in the workplace from the perspective of their own lived experience as a manager. This endorsement of value ranged from participants giving responses that were characterized as "unqualified strong positives" to simply "positive" responses, several of each often noting a qualifier such as life-stage or situation or a specific example or application of how they valued ambition.

As an example of a "unqualified strong positive", the response from Respondent 10, "I encourage that... every employee I've ever hired… always a telling sign of someone that's moldable and teachable." (2021, 10:05). Alternatively, Respondent 9 noted she valued ambition but that it may vary based on the type of work or immediate situation when faced with a situation in which she was hiring entry-level call-center employees and that though "corporate" valued ambition as evidenced by slogans and other cultural artifact, "it wasn't successfully done" (2021, 12:10) as it didn't seem to extend or apply to that role as much as perhaps the headquarter location. Respondent 1 indicated that it she valued it, "a lot" and, similarly to Respondent 9, that were "…several situations where I looked for that" implying a situational element to the valuation of ambition.

Also, in some cases, participants noted specifically why they valued ambition as when Respondent 2 noted she and others in the organization greatly valued it with a further specification that, "I wanted them to challenge and to be able to bring ideas or alternative thoughts or alternative ideas" or Respondent 14 noting valuation due to it reflecting greater self-reliance and accountability (2021, 08:34).

9) *How is ambition valued in your organization?*

Five respondents had responses that were characterized as "strong positive", nine as "positive" and two that were considered "nuanced positive" as they cited the importance and dependence on the proximal manager (Respondent 7) or noting it depended on the focus of the value on ambition being the manager's ambition (Respondent 6). Additionally, though characterized as one of the "strong positive" responses, Respondent 2 noted a dependency on role or the immediate culture of the location, a tone likely set by local managers thus reinforcing literature regarding the power of the immediate manager to enforce and interpret values.

> *10) How important is it to consider ambition as a factor in any of the areas of talent selection or acquisition, development, or performance management?*

For this query, respondents often noted multiple areas in which they felt ambition plays a role with the most (seven) respondents noting "selection" as a key area of talent management in which ambition is most important. These results are seen in Table 10 which notes 6 individuals indicated in their response, interestingly, that ambition may be innate, difficult to develop, or otherwise hard to screen for reliably and in advance.

Table 10
Value of Ambition to Talent Management Practice Area

Practice Area	Number of Specific Mentions
Selection	7
Innate or hard to assess	6
Development	5
Performance Management	5
Noted role-dependency in relevance	2
Other: Engagement; Retention; Diversity; Overall Culture	1

11) How important do you think the consideration of ambition is to desirable organizational

outcomes such as engagement, productivity, retention?

Though this question was different than the prior, its outcomes were similar and reinforced

aspects in which ambition is valued with respondents noting a wide variety of positive

organizational outcomes including increased diversity, customer focus, engagement, retention,

goal setting and achievement and culture as well as a one respondent noting the now familiar

situational- or role-based theme that it may be greater in "more professional… or salaried exempt

roles" (2021, Respondent 3, 14:15).

12) How would things be different or what would it be like if you valued ambition more for

employee you supervise?

This query is the managerial perspective equivalent to question 7 in section II (the employee

perspective) that plumbs the potential end-state of what "valuing ambition even more" would

look like which, like the similarly worded question in Section II addressing the employee

perspective, brings additional clarity to its value. As such responses were similar if not revealing

more details in most instances with one only respondent (Respondent 6) indicating it would be

more negative in the situation in which management focused on their own ambitions rather than

on the ambitions of their employees. Three respondents gave an "unsure" response

(Respondents 3, 8, and 14) while all others noted various positive aspects, often extensions of the

previous query, emphasizing areas such as organizational performance, pride-in-the workplace

and work (Respondents 3 and 7) as well as workplace diversity (Respondent 10) with selection

and performance management noted by several as well (Respondents 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, and 13).

Other themes noted were increased "listening" (Respondents 1 and 2), employee engagement

(Respondents 10 and 15) and innovation (Respondent 5) with nearly all respondents noting multiple positive attributes or behaviors.

Though but one respondent noted a negative potential end state (Respondent 6) if "ambition was valued even more", the support for this potential pitfall of ambition is reflected in an important but minority of various other responses as well as those who noted positive consequences but assumed that the proximal manager was "employee-focused" rather than excessively egocentric.

Summary

In review, 16 working adults with both two years of full-time work experience as well as managerial experience participated. These individuals are current adult students at University of Arkansas eVersity, designed from the ground up as cost-effective solution to bachelor's degree achievement and career advancement for working learners. Results indicated that ambition is indeed strongly and near universally valued in the workplace though certain contexts can impact its expression such as the proximal manager, the role, or company- or even global events as well as gender or other potentially other demographic influences. Further, when expressed in such a way that focuses on non-egocentric expressions of ambition by managers, it can be associated with a myriad of positive benefits at an individual, team, and overall organizational level.

Chapter 5: Summary and Discussion

Results from interviewing experienced working adults who have both an employee and a managerial perspective on the expression of ambition it the workplace were unequivocally clear that ambition is indeed highly valued in the workplace. Though this finding brings clarity to one issue, it only highlights another, that is, there exists a real gap between the perceived value of ambition in the workplace and the dearth of research cited by the few but noteworthy researchers in the space. Further, it suggests an opportunity for talent management professionals around a few key issues to improve workplace productivity and engagement.

Discussion of Results

Revisiting the stated purpose of this research, the research question sought to explore if ambition is valued in the workplace from the view of the employee as well as the perspective of managers and supervisors. The answer, unequivocally, is that respondents noted a positive valuation of ambition in the workplace yet this is tempered with situational nuances and contingencies that merit elaboration and suggest the need for additional research. This becomes more apparent when one steps away from reviewing the results from at an individual participant-level or a question-by-question basis, as a number of important themes become apparent when consideration to results is applied across both participants and interview questions.

Ambition, Unchallenged as a Multi-faceted Concept

Surprisingly, all participants embraced the multifaceted concept of ambition to the extent that one might be led to think such as concept was a part of a pre-existing dominant belief system. Certainly, this is a possible explanation yet, considering the noted scarcity of research on the topic of ambition (Jones et al., 2017; Judge & Kammeyer-Miller, 2012; Siegling & Petrides,

2016) and the unlikely familiarity with personality theory as adult working learners in a Bachelor of Business degree program, such seeming familiarity is unexpected.

This unfamiliarity is supported by literature in which ambition is most often associated with an achievement or competitive focus (Brim, 1992; Epstein, 1980; Field, 2002; Pettigrove, 2007; Spinner & Featherman, 1977; Talevich et al., 2017). Despite this, participants readily embraced or endorsed Field's multifaceted ambition concept introduced by the WAM assessment (Field, 2002) as part of the pre-participation questionnaire. A potential explanation for the rapid embrace may be that the idea was readily adopted because of their more extensive workforce experience and constructionist approach that colors the study and the multifaceted concept simply fit the experiences of interviewee. Such an explanation resonates with socioanalytic personality theory, one of the key theories underpinning this research with its three biological drives including that of the strong bias of "sense-making" (Hogan & Holland, 2003, p. 100; Tracy et al., 2015, 3:30;).

Related to this was the surprising, lower-than-expected number of participants that indicated any revisionist thinking or challenges to their own views of ambition. Though a quarter of participants, at some point in Section I, expressed what could be characterized as introspection, only four participants expressed any challenge to the expression of ambition in terms of perspective, gender, culture, or situation or role throughout all questions in the interview.

To elaborate on these challenges, perhaps most notable was one participant who, upon further probing, based her more nuanced and cautious endorsement of ambition as a positive in terms of her view that the key to ambition being positive are in situations in which managers do not focus on their own ambitions but rather seek to know, accept, and encourage the ambitions of their employees. This perspective was surprising in its clarity, simplicity, and as a result of

perhaps an insufficiently stated or understood assumption in the research that the managerial perspective of ambition would focus on the valuation of the concept at the level of the employee rather than at the level of self. Alternatively, the value of ambition from the employee perspective evoked in Section II of the interviews were based on the valuation of ambition by the management level, again directed outward with the employee as the target. Though seemingly understood at the onset, the participant's views reinforced the importance of perspective and emphasized the importance of the manager's focus on employee vs. self-interests.

The Importance of the Proximal Manager

One area where literature and experience agree is the importance of one's immediate manager. Such cliché phrases as, "people don't leave companies, people leave managers" (Nolan, 2018), though they hold some truth, can be misleading (McPherson, 2021). Despite the controversy of the complete truth of the phrase, it is undisputed that managers and leadership play a significant role in many aspects of modern work life and are the primary mediator of systems, policies, and processes of the organization (Chiaburu & Lim, 2008; Gill, 2008; Kane-Urrabazo, 2006; Whitener et al., 1998).

Though participants called out situations in which managers played a significant role in advancing, curbing, or otherwise influencing the expression and reward of ambition, this concept goes beyond any specific situation to underscore the role that managers have more broadly in how they shape both specific behaviors as well as behavior in general via atmosphere or culture in the workplace. Specifically, the proximal manager plays a vital role in either the positive treatment or, alternatively, the suppression of an employee's ambition. This can amplify or potentially even nullify broader strokes made at the highest levels in the organization to promote or value ambition. As an example, Respondent 1 (2021, 12:10) noted the organization she was

employed promoted certain corporate values that were very aligned with themes of ambition yet, she stated those values seemed, "more geared toward the corporate employees and less toward the people on the front line" (2021, 12:10). In this case and likely many similar ones, whether historic or in the present, either or both the senior manager onsite did not propagate corporate messaging or, the lowest-ranking corporate manager in charge of the site though seated elsewhere did not push communications to the local site manager regarding the corporate values or culture. In effect, whether by design or by accident, one of these manager roles broke the link in the transmission of corporate values.

Echoing the children's game of telephone in which a line of youth pass on anything more than the simplest communication, over the course of just a few transmissions of person-to-person, the communication can be altered in meaning, often unrecognizable from the original message. However, in this adult version of the game that plays out in the workplace as various information is transmitted from the highest levels of management to the rest of the organization, it is possible for certain players to opt out entirely or sometimes even substituting their own potentially conflicting message. This theme is also evident in the Respondent 2 when she specifically was chosen on the basis of her ambition and the ability to deliver against it, her present manager "wants us always to remember our place" (2021, 11:09). And, it should be noted that this is not a factor or theme that is limited to expression with gender but rather is focused on power imbalances though historically, many power imbalances may coexist or be initiated or facilitated by differences in gender, race, sexuality or other socio-demographic basis (Burke, 2020). This exemplified by Respondent 13 in which his superiors felt threatened and perceived conflict because of his ambition when they were newly appointed over his area (2021).

The Power of the Situation

It is important to note that regardless of or, despite behavioral intention, situations can be powerful mediators or expressed actions (Fishbein & Azjen, 1980) and is reminiscent of the seminal film, *The Power of the Situation* (WGBH & APA, 1990) a short documentary on social psychology which situations significantly impact expressed behavior. This theme is also very aligned with the theoretical underpinnings of research in self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) and subsequent broader applications such as the socioanalytic model of personality (Hogan, 1982), self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), and social cognitive career theory (Lent 2013b), all of which feature prominently in understanding the concept of ambition in the workplace.

Specifically, this research effort revealed five respondents who called out elements of situational influence on the expression or regard of ambition in the workplace in which they noted the power of the local manager to attenuate, suppress, or change the valuation of ambition. As an example, Respondent 10 succinctly noted, "It's definitely influenced situationally" (2021, 6:41) while Respondents 1, 3, 5, 13, and 15 all noted the importance of one's role being potentially more or less suited to being valued for ambition. This was well-stated by Respondent 3 (2021, 10:46) when she noted:

> Some people that are okay doing the same thing day in, day out, clocking in and clocking out, just doing what's required. And... and, sometimes that doesn't lend itself to... potentially finding ways to improve processes or… or any of it. So I think ambition is definitely... it's not a requirement... but it is certainly a good trait that while you do need the other people to be the consistencies, you know, to provide that reliability of the, you know, things are going to get done during certain times, I think people with ambition are not necessarily catalysts of change, but they lend themselves to change and improvements and positive development.

Indeed, though the sample in this study revealed near unanimous positive regard for ambition, it is important to note that such as positive value most be supported by circumstances and context

of the situation. Specifically, the theme that ambition is likely to be more valued in leadership roles or those that value initiative, innovation, or change over roles that prize consistency or maintenance of the status quo is clearly present.

Implications for Practice

When considering these findings along with the fact that 75% of all turnover in the workplace is voluntary with a primary reason being a lack of career development which costs US firms $630 billion annually is staggering (Achievers, 2020; Akhtar, 2019; Conference Executive Board (CEB), 2015; Gallup, 2017; Mahan et al., 2019; Morris, 2018). When one considers what the emotional and behavioral precursors to voluntary departure might look or feel like, it is sobering. To be in a role in which employees feel that their career ambitions are better served in another organization should seemingly set alarm bells ringing for managers as well as human resources and talent management professionals.

Talent Management Practices and Ambition: Farming or Hunting?

The importance of ambition in the selection aspect of talent management, especially in roles which seem more suited for its display, in selection was noted in the prior chapter. Using a metaphor for the approach to sourcing candidates that are sufficiently ambitious for the context or role at hand, the range for talent management professionals exist on a continuum from "farming" to "hunting". That is, in order to compete in the "talent wars", talent professionals or organizations need to be good at either finding the right individuals that have the right knowledge or skills, or they need to be adept at developing the employees they have (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Lepak & Snell, 1999; Meyers and van Woerkom, 2017). However, three respondents noted their uncertainty that ambition can be trained (Respondents 3, 11, & 15, 2021) which creates the appropriate question of if ambition can be "farmed" or developed at all,

leaning toward the approach that "talent is scarce" and is either hard or costly to develop (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Huselid, 2005; Meyers & van Woerkom, 2017).

There is no doubt that ambition is on the more stable, durable characteristics on the continuum of psychological constructs from transient "moods" to the durable element of personality expression (Ardelt, 2000). Whether it is a primary trait of personality derived from a five-factor model (Jones et al., 2016) or if it is a "middle-level trait" (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012), the question of if ambition is malleable becomes similar to the question of malleability of personality. Thus, under the assumption that is either is or "is like" personality, the question if one can change their personality becomes salient. The answer to this, in a recent and rigorous review by 15 authors, is that personality traits are very stable though, at particular times in life such as the transition from adolescence to adulthood or with sustained or substantial effort, personality or its expression can indeed be changed (Bleidorn et al., 2019) and further, there are noted theorists that would attest to the power of the situation in shaping the expression of personality as well (Damian et al., 2019; Mischel, 2009; Roberts, 2006).

With this is mind, organizations ought to take a blended approach slightly skewed toward "hunting" based on the idea that though ambition, like other durable constructs can be changed but, it is easier and less resource intensive to work with those who already possess this quality. That is, talent selection resources should be allocated to finding the appropriate amount of ambition in candidates and hires (hunting) though it is important that those focused on talent development do not ignore the cultivation, recognition, and rewarding of ambition (farming) to align and support the overall approach. Thus, there is evidence that both a "top-down" (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Huselid, 2005; Meyers & van Woerkom, 2017) and "bottom up" to talent development (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Lepak & Snell, 1999) may yield results though the

choice ought to be deliberate and the option of one approach compared to the other will incur a very different allocation of resources. Further, and perhaps of greater importance is the role of larger systems and structures inclusive within broader aspects of human capital management that create and maintain a culture that values ambition subject to appropriate roles or contexts of the firm. This second area extends the metaphor of "farming" to creating an organization with "good soil" that is properly prepared and tended to foster ambition and its positive valuation so that the positive effects can be realized. While perhaps an apt metaphorical illustration of a how an organization might approach the topic, it also enforces the theoretical underpinnings of the "power of the situation" to influence the expression or suppression of behavior and the traits that are hypothesized to drive them. Finally, such an approach is aligned with dominant themes in talent management literature that indicate for optimal outcomes, process must be strategic, aligned, and integrated (Hunt, 2014; Israelite, 2010; Rothwell, 2012; Stahl et al., 2012).

Thought it may not be essential that talent management professionals have an understanding of personality theory, they should be deeply cognizant of the power of the situation which would be inclusive of structure, pathways, culture, as well as the dominant effects that organizational leaders and managers have on the ambition in the workplace. Specifically, Socioanalytic Personality Theory (Hogan, 1984) would suggest that the work of talent management prepare any employee to be able to answer three key questions in relation to the broader organization as well as at the lowest levels or in remote locations away from headquarters sites where centralized influences maybe be lower: How does one "get ahead", how does one "get along", and can I "make sense" of it all? (Hogan & Holland, 2003, p. 100; Tracy et al., 2015, 3:30). By having an understanding and acceptance of how employees address these

questions, organizations can gain deeper insight into the overall effectiveness of organizational development efforts.

In terms of what this might look like in practice, there are three interrelated areas that readily come to mind: structure, transparency, and promotion.

Structure, Transparency, & Promotion

Organizational structure is collective term for "how work flows through an organization" and consists of five elements "job design, departmentation, delegation, span of control, and chain of command" (Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), 2017). Without much effort, it is easy to see how the five elements, when aligned and made clear to all employees could contribute greatly to each of the three biological drives of socioanalytic personality theory. It is important to note that while structures and forms of business organization vary, so long as these elements are aligned and conflict between elements is minimized, the organization is likelier to achieve higher performance at both an organizational and individual level (DeCanio et al., 2000).

Further, as one might rationally infer, these five elements of organizational structure (SHRM, 2017) influence the attitudes and expressed behaviors of employee (Cummings & Berger, 1976) which translates to the overall organizational performance (Dalton et al., 1980). While there are many successful organizational forms, having transparency or clarity will reduce confusion, speculation, and possibly dissent as employees will be able to get along and readily make sense of how decisions in the organization are made. Having this information readily available and visible in the form of cultural artifacts and other elements of communication can create a culture in which values are aligned and reinforced, further enhancing the purpose and intent of the organization's structure (Bunch, 2007).

Gender Influences & Ambition

As some respondents (Respondents 2, 6, and 11) as well as recent literature note, there are occasions for various individuals that are often-but-not-always based on gender or other sociodemographic characteristic, in which the expression of ambition is less favorably viewed or in many cases, explicitly discouraged (Abouzhar et al., 2017; Burke, 2020; Fels, 2004; O'Connell, 2018). Indeed, at least three respondents, noted a suppression of ambition ranging from the culture that exists from the proximal manager or other highly localized or departmental level to the culture of a nation in addition to those that noted other role-based situational influences. Though gender or demographic suppression of ambition is a distinct and likely a large category of influence on the expression of ambition in the workplace and though more study is warranted, a fuller inquiry into this important area was out of scope for this research undertaking. Despite the importance and distinctiveness of the topic, effort to promote greater equality and inclusion in this area is likely quite in line with other situational influences through the manipulation of the levers of the organization control via structural elements noted above.

Though the elements of organizational structure (SHRM, 2017) ostensibly apply to business, the same elements could be rationally extended to other forms of organization including social or family structures. In much the same way that elements of national culture can be assessed, so too can other units of organization such as businesses or any unit larger than the individual (Hofstede, 2012). Thus, the elements of the organizational structure, regardless of the organization's form, can be leveraged to create, enforce, or change the dominant systems that exist in which ambition may not be equitably valued across individuals or groups. As such, these could be viewed as the levers of change to create and maintain systems for a culture in which ambition was valued and career assessment and development opportunities were promoted.

Alignment with Theoretical Constructs

Though the purpose of this research was not to prove (or disprove) any theory, the findings underscore the value of the theoretical constructs leveraged at the onset of this work. Specifically, the value of SCCT as an extension of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), incorporation of values and interests (Lent, 2013), and with its emphasis on the power of the situational context to influence outcomes (Lent et al., 1994) remains relevant. However, despite SCCT's general applicability, a few participants did make note of significant unplanned life or workplace events. These sentiments reflect the emphasis of Pryor and Bright's extension of SCCT, Chaos Career Theory (2005). As the purpose of the research was a focus on the valuation of ambition, the nuances of these two related theories viz a viz the impact of unplanned circumstances was not explored.

If career theory was one foundational source of insight for this research, personality theory was the other. Similar to SCCT, it was not the purpose of this research to explore or validate theoretical constructs though it is reassuring to having data that align with models utilized to understand and frame information. In this way, though nothing contradicted five-factor models of personality, the findings of this study reinforce a view more aligned with the Socioanalytic Theory of Personality (Hogan, 1982) in two important ways. First, the overarching biological drives of "getting ahead", "getting along", and "making sense of it all" (Tracy et al., 2015, 3:30; Hogan & Holland, 2003, p. 100) resonate deeply with the overall tone and impressions from the interviews. Secondly, as the findings of this research indicate a clear valuation of ambition in the workplace, it is clear that while five factor models are not incorrect, they seem to missing an opportunity to speak to the lived experiences of individuals in the workplace by their omission of "ambition". Though five factor models are valid, whether

ambition exists as a "middle-level trait" (Judge & Kammeyer-Miller, 2012) or possibly simply not being widely understood as being distinct from the concept of "motivation" (Silzer & Borman, 2017; Silzer & Church, 2009), Hogan's Socioanalytic Theory of Personality (1982) substantially reconciles both of these issues.

Managing the Opportunity

In summary, the results from this research indicate that better understanding and managing ambition in the workplace by talent management professionals could be a source of a significant advantage to employers. Further, the management of ambition, or any other value or initiative in the workplace is likely too dependent on the effectiveness or general inclinations of the proximal manager. Based on this research, ambition is clearly important yet is vastly too dependent on a "good manager", often uncodified processes, and frequently unsupported by either formal policy, structure, metrics or accountability.

According to the diverse respondents in this research, the list of positive attributes that would increase "if ambition were valued even more" is impressive and ranges from the expected responses such as increased individual and organizational achievement to the unanticipated potential of increased communication, innovation, accountability, teamwork, and a culture in which employees feel more valued for their contributions. Though according to these representative workers, ambition *is* valued in the workplace but there is little evidence that it is valued or tracked in the same manner as other more commonplace indicators of performance such as those that track production, profit, or even safety.

Considering this, like the few key financial measures of organizational health and similar to a few key production data that operations may focus on, or the net promoter score that sales or

customer service teams work to optimize, imagine if human resources and talent management had a similar system of a select indicators that would give a snapshot of the health of this important area of the firm. It is ironic that human resource personnel often talk about "getting a seat at the table" in reference to the perspective of sometimes feeling "left out" of key business decisions when people form the metaphorical legs of the tables that everyone is sitting at. To support this assertion, a recent Google search of "HR, seat at the table" yield in excess of 24 million hits with notable content resources as Harvard Business, Review, Forbes, and SHRM near the top with titles all echoing the same sentiment, often lamenting or conceptualizing human resource personnel being absent or omitted from significant business decisions.

Thus, what might aid in this situation as well as the very real and costly problem of a lack of appropriate career development is a readily understood talent-oriented metric(s) with a categorization that gives quick insight into the state of talent management and development. Such measures would likely be leading indicators of personnel costs reflecting the potential of increased turnover or, alternatively, a leading indicator correlating with higher performing organizations and teams with respect to innovation, diversity, retention, development, and collaboration, all items that were noted by research participants. Indeed, to collectively measure the ambition of an organization against its operational capabilities and initiatives would seem to be a valuable assessment of current and future organizational health.

However, as noted initially in the chapter, this measure of ambition needs to be accompanied by a culture that arises from a structure that creates a virtuous cycle to proactively prevent the rise of three key potentially dysfunctional elements: people, power, and processes. In terms of ambition, as respondents and other sources note, the power of the proximal manager is such that the most elegant and well-intentioned plans for employee talent and career

development can be derailed when managers select and promote their own agenda thus labeled "dysfunctional people". Similarly, "power" can be dysfunctional when relationships are exploited on the basis of unfair power structures that allow behaviors that are not equitable to exist. Examples of this would be discriminatory or harassing behaviors based on gender, race, or other categories that promote insecurity and inequity in the workplace. It is important to note that the workplace should not likely be one of equity but rather a meritocracy and in no case should be power be exploited as a means to justify inequity on any basis but performance or some reasonable accommodation to individual needs. Dysfunctional systems are those that arise from power or people but now are integrated into operations so that dysfunctional processes and outcomes are reinforced. Creating a culture in which managers were accountable and integrated into the talent management process would likely go a long way to reducing workplace inequity as well as aiding in the development of employees.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research was initiated substantially to reconcile 20 plus years of professional work experience with a variety of some of the most sophisticated organizations in the country with the messaging, artifacts, and actions of talent management practices. These experiences include working as an employee in professional organizations, as a vendor/partner, as a student, and in research of and efforts in the application process to become an employee of various organizations. These varied experiences contribute possibly a thousand or more vignettes, many of which reflect aspects of data cited in the problem statement regarding three fourths of voluntary departures being due to a lack of career development or opportunity (Achievers, 2020; Akhtar, 2019; Conference Executive Board (CEB), 2015; Gallup, 2017; Mahan et al., 2019; Morris, 2018). Despite the personal salience as well as the significant cost of voluntary turnover,

the irony of the present state of a research is alarming and, as a result, the opportunities for additional inquiry are numerous and diverse.

A notable future edition of this work should likely include some characterization of the state of talent management from the employer. Given the range of talent management practices and lack of characterization outside of a general range of low-to-high sophistication or involvement (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000), this was not a topic on inquiry. Though many respondents were part of large organizations that are known to have a talent management function, this was not captured in the data. Though research indicates that most medium to large organizations do have this function (Kotlyar, 2018; Silzer & Borman, 2017; Silzer & Church, 2009), there is no indicator to their effectiveness, only their presence.

Also, while it would be desirable to see a study in which an appropriately sized division or perhaps a few operating units of a suitably large organization were set up as an extended experiment in which a comprehensive talent management strategy with a focus on leveraging the ambition concept could be compared to other untreated, business-as-usual units, such an experiment is not likely without addressing other more fundamental questions. First among these might be a survey of existing talent management practices for evidence of current ways that ambition is managed. In the modern era with such platforms as LinkedIn that facilitates access to many organizations or via various respected annual surveys such as SHRM or ATD (Association of Talent Development), it would seem not-to-difficult to implement a survey that measured the perceptions of how organizations manage career development presently from which those that were best-in-class could be compared to worst-in-class for how employees felt their ambition and career development was being appropriately managed.

From a more psychological basis, having a better understanding of what the "average" level of ambition is would be interesting if not potentially helpful. In this study, the WAM was utilized solely as a means to acquaint participant with the multifaceted concept of ambition and not as a means to truly assess or score individuals. Given the process rigor that went into developing the WAM instrument, it would be interesting to get a calibration and distribution that might offer insight or potential predictive value into how ambition or talent management might go awry. For example, the question of if ambitious people more likely to leave an organization or disproportionately affected by sub-optimal talent management practices would likely be of interest to both employees as well as management.

Other inquiries could be directed at youth… For example, is there a correlation to ambition and intention as well as behavior to attend college? Is there a connection between ambition and the college that one attends? Are arts focused institutions or programs populated by less ambitious students than highly focused college preparatory schools? Is there a connection between ambition and extracurricular activity participation and achievement such as intervarsity athletics, scouting, or the arts such as band, chorus, or theatre? Also, given that ambition is defined as trait-like and trait expression, e.g., personality, is likely more malleable at certain time of transition such as adolescence (Bleidorn et al., 2019), an inquiry into how ambition changes with participation in these types of formative and competitive performance-based activities would be both potentially useful as parents, teachers, and coaches might seek to inculcate and develop ambition.

Introspection Suggests Opportunity

In regard to both organizational and social dynamics as well as in personal situations, I consider myself to be an ambitious person. In addition to my experiences as an employee of

various organizations, I have the experiences of a college professor who has taught 1,000+ students in the principles of business and organizational strategy and operations that gives the perspective and insight of many student papers, cases, and inquiries, all of which contributed to the idea that most organizations are missing "something". Indeed, this doctoral journey has been as much focused on working to better understand and reconcile my own ambition and my struggles with a strong desire to "do better" as it has been about the ambition of achievement of a terminal academic research degree. I have been told that I am a "very intense" person and internally debate if it is the right thing to do to hold others to my own standards or to acknowledge that best efforts of some are simply not good enough. I suspect that my pursuit of continuous improvement, while admirable in some ways, is quite confounding and aggravating in others… likely especially to those that I live with, my family. As such, research inquiries into family dynamics include spouse/partner as well as parent-child relations and conflicts would likely be interesting, useful, and plentiful.

In conclusion, as with most American children, the various forms of the message that "anything is possible with hard work" is inspiring. From heroic tales of "rags to riches" to the very personal lessons of the virtues and rewards of hard work from my family of origin, I became culturally inoculated with the belief that my own determination and drive would result in successively greater achievements. Despite several years of experience with large organizations and my own great ambition, I have not seldom seen an organization that fully addresses this trait that America was built upon. As evidence of this shortcoming, the fact that 75% of voluntary departures from organizations note a failure to provide adequate means or explanation to support the desire of employees for development speaks loudly (Achievers, 2020; Akhtar, 2019; Conference Executive Board (CEB), 2015; Gallup, 2017; Mahan et al., 2019; Morris, 2018). It

would seem that the organization that effectively manages this concept would have a potential source of competitive advantage by matching ability, need, and desire as well as by reducing frustration that is likely to result when an individual's ambitions are not matched by either their career path or appropriate counseling or development.

Summary

Ambition is a concept that has been largely and systematically ignored by talent selection, management, and development function and represents either a potentially untapped source of competitive advantage can promote higher performance as well as innovation and inclusivity. Moderating the expression of ambition are the levers and buttons of organization structure and the disposition of the proximal manager, all of which contribute to govern the situation and culture that promotes or suppresses individual behaviors. Though opportunity for future study in the workplace are numerous, there are many other areas that future study would be interesting and useful including youth development as well as family dynamics.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent Document

Project Title: Understanding the role of ambition in the workplace.

Principal Researcher: Jeff Bean, Doctoral Candidate

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Vicki Dieffenderfer

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to determine the value of ambition in the workplace from both an employee and an organizational perspective by interviewing experienced managerial personnel in different industries.

Procedures:
> You are invited to participate in an interview of approximately 30 minutes via a technology-mediated means. The interview will begin with the administration and subsequent review of the Workplace Ambition Measure (WAM), a short, 25-item assessment. The purpose of this is to familiarize the interviewee with a multifaceted concept of ambition and to respond to interview questions seeking your perspective on the value of ambition in the workplace. The interview will be conducted via a teleconferencing platform and will be recorded via electronic means and transcribed for accuracy. You may elect to receive a copy of the transcript. The interviewer may take written notes during the interview.

Risks of Participation:
> There are no known physical risks associated with this project greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life. Potential occupational/employment risk is mitigated by the omittance of any specific organization or participant name. As the interview will be remotely conducted, there are no risks of COVID19 transmission.

Benefits: No direct benefits are associated with this research to participants.

Confidentiality:
> Names of participants, names of any individuals not widely known in the public, and the names of specific organizations will not be included in any final outcomes of this work. Recordings of interviews will be stored on password protected, limited access computer hard drives or cloud storage with reasonable precautions and safeguards utilized.
>
> Responses and their analysis will be utilized for the candidate's University of Arkansas doctoral dissertation and subsequent research as well as shared with the developer of the WAM.
>
> The original recordings, if utilized, will be kept for a minimum of five years. There are no foreseeable risks in maintaining confidentiality. After a period of seven years, recordings in any form may be deleted.

All interview transcripts in any form as well as any other information obtained from the participants will be kept confidential to the fullest extent of the law and University policy.

The University of Arkansas Institutional Review Board has the authority to inspect consent records and data files to assure compliance with approved procedures. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact Ro Windwalker, the University's IRB Compliance Coordinator, at 479-575-2208 or irb@uark.edu.

Compensation: No compensation will be offered for participation in this study.

Contacts: For questions about this study, contact Jeff Bean, ██████████████████ ██████████████, telephone: ██████████, email: jbean@uark.edu.

For concerns about this study, contact:

    Dr. Vicki Dieffenderfer, Director, Professional Studies
    College of Interdisciplinary Studies
    140 SWH
    Tennessee Tech University
    Cookeville, TN 38505
    Telephone: ██████████; email: vmdieffe@uark.edu.

Participant Rights:
    As a participant in this research, you are entitled to know the nature of my research. You are free to decline to participate, and you are free to stop the interview or withdraw from the study at any time. No penalty or risks are associated with withdrawing your participation. Feel free to ask any questions at any time about the nature of the research activity and the methods I am using.

Signatures:
    I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form has been given to me.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   *Date*

    I certify that I have personally explained this document before requesting that the participant sign it.

_____   _____
Signature of Researcher   *Date*

Appendix B: Permission to use WAM

From:	Dr. Cynthia Fields, <█████████████████>
Sent:	Sunday, December 2, 2018
To:	Jeff Bean
Subject:	Re: Dissertation Research

Hi Jeff,

This sounds like an interesting topic. I think the relationship between ambition and narcissism should be teased out. Off the cuff, I'd say that narcissism fuels ambition. I can't imagine coaching someone without knowing the underlying factors that drive them. Healthy narcissism is adaptive and flexible. When it goes too far, organizations suffer staggering losses.

I'd be curious to hear your thoughts about the shifts in attitudes and work styles in millennials and how that shapes ambition. There may be a clash of styles when millennials try to show their stuff and are stymied by old school hierarchical management structures. Or when millennials value time more than money or accomplishments. Someone I know just finished his residency and was offered a combined teaching and attending position at Harvard Med School and one of its hospitals. He said he would only do it if it was a four day a week job. When Harvard turned down the request, he said "Okay" and headed for the door. Eventually Harvard agreed to his request, but I imagine some of the older doctors were surprised that a 28-year-old who happens to be highly ambitious would risk losing a job offer.

You're welcome to use my scale for free if you share the data with me after its collected. Please note that it's now copyrighted. I'd be happy to read your draft and throw in my two cents!

Good luck with your work and stay in touch.

Best regards,

Cynthia

Appendix C: Letter to Participants

Dear *e*Versity Student,

One of the hallmarks of a college education is the consumption of academic work that stems from the discovery of new knowledge. The faculty members that teach are engaged in the constant discovery of new knowledge. This new knowledge forms the basis of scientific discoveries, deeper understanding of the human condition, and a richer appreciation of our shared past. One of the most common methods of discovering new knowledge is through the use of surveys and interviews. Based on your status as a *e*Versity business student you have been selected to participate in a research project being conducted by one of our faculty members, Mr. Jeff Bean. You may have already had a course with Mr. Bean or will do so in the future. His project seeks to better understand the role of "ambition" as it relates to the workplace.

Your decision to participate – or not – will have no bearing on any aspect of your student status in any way and any statements you make will not be attributed to you individually or any organization where you work. Rather, information will be generalized to demographic characteristics and type of employment experience (e.g., a Hispanic male employed by in the retail sector between the ages of 30 and 50, etc). Only Professor Bean will know your full identity and that information will not be shared without your express permission. You can stop participation at any time for any reason.

To participate, you must: 1) have two years or more of total work experience, 2) be between 30 and 50 years old and, 3) be willing to be interviewed regarding your views and experience of ambition in the workplace. Also, if you have had at least two years of experience as a manager or supervisor, a few additional questions will be asked from that perspective as well. Only the first 15 individuals whose schedules permit will be interviewed. If you are selected to participate, you will be asked to complete a short assessment (less than 5 minutes) and participate in a recorded interview via teleconference with you in which you respond to up to ten (10) questions (about 30 minutes or less).

If you are interested and willing to be considered for participation, **<u>CLICK HERE</u>**.

If you would like additional information or have questions, I encourage you to contact Professor Bean at jbean@uark.edu. Should you have additional questions or concerns, you are also welcome to contact his dissertation advisor, Dr. Vicki Dieffenderfer at vmdieffe@uark.edu or myself via responding to this email.

As always, I am grateful for your continued engagement at *e*Versity.

Sincerely,

Michael K. Moore, PhD
Chief Academic and Operating Officer
University of Arkansas System *e*Versity

Appendix F: Pre-Interview Questionnaire

***This will be an electronic form

Pre-Interview Questions

Thank you very much for your willingness to participate in this research. Your responses to these questions will help look for patterns and gaps in other collected data.

Name: _____

Age: _____

Gender: ___ Male   ___ Female

                           ___ Transgender Male   ___ Transgender Female

                           ___ Gender Variant/Non-Conforming

                           ___ Other   ___ Prefer not to disclose

Race: ___ African American or Black

                       ___ Asian

                       ___ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

                       ___ White

                           ___ Hispanic or Latino Origin   ___ Not Hispanic or Latino Origin

                       ___ Prefer not to disclose

Highest Education: ___ less than high school diploma

                                 ___ high school diploma

                                 ___ some college but less than 4-year degree

                                 ___ 4-year degree

                                 ___ master's degree or higher

How many years of full-time work experience do you have? _____

How many years of experience managing the work of others do you have? _____

Do you have at least two years of experience managing others who are between 30 and 50 years of age?

            ___ Yes ___ No

Appendix G: The Workplace Ambition Measure (WAM) Assessment

This assessment is presented to help familiarize you with both the concept of ambition and how it can be expressed as well as to give you an idea of how you might assess yourself prior to an interview in which you will be asked several questions regarding ambition in the workplace.

For each sentence, simply give yourself a rating that you think accurately reflects the extent to which you agree with the statement with "1" being "strongly disagree" to "5" indicating you "strongly agree".

Aspirations	Self-Rating				
It's important for me to move up in my job or company.	1	2	3	4	5
It's important for me to move up in my profession.	1	2	3	4	5
I am determined to achieve my goals.	1	2	3	4	5
I get excited when I think about where my career is going.	1	2	3	4	5
It is important for me to succeed in my profession.	1	2	3	4	5
Active Engagement					
I take charge of meetings.	1	2	3	4	5
I tell people what I think of them and their work in a direct way.	1	2	3	4	5
I am direct with my criticisms of people.	1	2	3	4	5
I am forceful.	1	2	3	4	5
I like to talk to large groups of people.	1	2	3	4	5
Competitiveness					
It takes me a while to regroup after failure.	1	2	3	4	5
I get frustrated if somebody does a better job than I do.	1	2	3	4	5
I need ongoing rewards to stick with a tough project.	1	2	3	4	5
Being better than co-workers is more satisfying than just getting a job done. Other people seem to juggle more projects than I do.	1	2	3	4	5
It takes me a while to regroup after failure.	1	2	3	4	5
Perseverance					
I push myself to stick with tough projects.	1	2	3	4	5
I think about how to improve my work performance.	1	2	3	4	5
I work longer hours than my peers and co-workers.	1	2	3	4	5
I push myself to accomplish a lot.	1	2	3	4	5
My colleagues tell me I work really hard.	1	2	3	4	5
Personal Investment					
I get fired up when I am working on something really challenging.	1	2	3	4	5
I go out on a limb to stand up for my ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
I get frustrated when I realize that I could have done a better job.	1	2	3	4	5
I have had some very good ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
People say I have high standards for the people who work for me.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix H: Sample Online Survey for Eligibility and Intent to Participate

Potential participants will receive a Qualtrics survey with the following questions:

Do you have at least two years of experience managing others between the ages of 30 to 50, five years or more of full-time work experience, and willing to participate in this study by allowing a remotely recorded interview lasting approximately 30 minutes? [Yes or No]

If "Yes" –

Please enter your first name and last name:

Please enter your preferred email:

Please enter a phone contact:

Years of experience managing others between the ages of 30 and 50: ___

Years of full-time work experience: ___

Please note any concerns or comments regarding contacting you (e.g., do not call after 9pm, only use email, call between 9am and 6pm, etc.).

If "No" –

"Thank you for your consideration."

Appendix I: Partner Organization Consent Agreement

Copy of correspondence between the author and Dr. Michael Moore, Chief Academic and

Operating Officer, University of Arkansas System *e*Versity summarizing the intent of the research and

requesting consideration for eVersity undergraduate business program as subjects.

From: Michael Moore
To: Jeff Bean
Subject: Re: dissertation - Jeff Bean - Partner Organization Consent Agreement
Date: Wednesday, January 13, 2021 11:15:47 AM

Jeff,
I'm happy to work with you to reach a sample of students from eVersity. We pulled the
business students for the past three terms and have 212 names for you. Send me a draft of the
letter when you get approval and we can coordinate the outreach.

Michael

On Mon, Jan 11, 2021 at 3:31 PM Jeff Bean <jbean@uark.edu> wrote:

Michael,

Per our recent conversation, I deeply appreciate your willingness to engage eVersity
business students the opportunity with my research on the value of ambition in the
workplace. I think they are a very good fit as this group represents a diverse perspective in
the modern workplace that has experience with one or more facets of ambition.

Following your affirmative response to this email which will serve to document agreement
for inclusion into the IRB submission, I will be sending you a draft communication for the
purpose of soliciting participants that you can review and edit to reflect your own voice and
thoughts. After IRB approval, we'll be poised to send the communication and I will eagerly
begin collecting data and subsequent analysis.

Thank you,

Jeff Bean

██████████

From: Jeff Bean
Sent: Monday, January 4, 2021 12:35 PM
To: Dr. Michael Moore
<■■■■■■■@■■■■■■■■■■>
Subject: dissertation - Jeff Bean

Michael,

I hope this finds you well and COVID free and poised to an even better 2021.

For [early!] 2021, I am working to get my own dissertation completed. After passing the oral defense, I made final tweaks in preparation for IRB submission yet I needed a "partner organization" from which to get 15 participants for an up to ½ hour remote video interview. After connecting with a few potential organizations, in light of the increasing demands on staff with regard to COVID and other org changes, finding a single organization to partner with is proving more difficult than I anticipated.

It is in this regard that I am asking for your permission to solicit participation from eVersity business degree students or recent alumna. Given my affiliation with eVersity and in light of the overall fit of the population as working adults, the students in the business program would be an excellent match for this voluntary, non-deceptive technology-mediated, less-than-30-minute interview on their experience regarding their perception of the value of ambition in the workplace. Specifically, I am asking permission to send an email requesting their participation with an accompanying link to a survey to both get key demographic and scheduling information as well as a few basic screening questions regarding employment and experience.

As you may recall from our previous conversation, my dissertation if focused on clarifying the value of ambition in the workplace. Though similar in some topical ways to your own dissertation, mine specifically excludes any elements of *political* ambition and is focused on the workplace. Interestingly, 75% of voluntary departures are tied to a lack of career development and talent management implications (Mahan et al., 2019) and I am hopeful that, in addition to shedding might on my own ambition, my research point to ways that all workplaces can better manage talent.

While you likely have far greater experience in what such at letter of cooperation should look like – and, I specifically invite your input – I am under the impression that your affirmative response to this email would construe sufficient evidence of intent-to-collaborate for inclusion into my IRB submission. For your convenience, I have attached my approved Problem Statement (sans accompanying reference list) below my signature.

Thanks so much for your speedy consideration and advocacy,

Jeff Bean
■■■■■■■■■■■

Problem Statement

Talent management comprises a wide range of human resource activities within the context of organization that is inclusive of selection, placement, development, and succession planning (Thunnissen & Gallardo-Gallardo, 2017; Shuler, 2015; Chambers et al., 1998). In this regard, the Work Institute notes that voluntary turnover accounts for three of every four separations and represents a $630 billion cost to organizations in the US alone (Mahan et al., 2019). In addition, the total that US organizations collectively spend on training and development in 2019 is $83 billion (2019 Training Industry Report, 2019). As such, ensuring these efforts are delivered to the right individuals with both the desire to benefit and the ability to develop their potential as part of their own strategy to advance their career are valid concerns of organizations (Bynam et al., 2002).

From the perspective of talent management, the two aspects of the ambition concept that are the most related to career advancement and development are elements of the themes of achievement and aspiration (Fields, 2002) which reflect an employee's ability to actualize the biological drive of "getting ahead" in life and career choices (Tracy et al.., 2015, 3:30; Hogan & Holland, 2003). In the context of the workplace, appropriate career development programs and processes show an effort on behalf of the organization to find, develop, and retain good employees in productive roles (Thunnissen & Gallardo-Gallardo, 2017; Shuler, 2015; Chambers et al., 1998). Despite this, the result in a lack of career opportunity is frequently cited as a top reason employees leave an organization (Achievers, 2020; Akhtar, 2019; Mahan et al., 2019; Morris, 2018; Gallup, 2017; Conference Executive Board (CEB), 2015).

Despite this considerable relevance of ambition in the career development process, there is a notable scarcity of research on the topic of ambition which creates uncertainty regarding its actual relevance or value in the workplace despite many studies which note both the high salience of ambition to talent selection, performance management, or career outcomes as well as the scarcity of research on the topic (Bersin & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2019; Jones et al., 2017; Siegling & Petrides, 2016; Judge & Kammeyer-Miller, 2012, Pettigrove, 2007; Ng et al.., 2005; Desrochers & Dahir, 2000). Outside of a very limited audience that is the target of Hogan Personality Assessments or CCL activities and **literature, there is little evidence of ambition being used in any purposeful, structured means (Evatt, 2019; Wilcox, 2013; King, 2013). Given the thematic alignment of the ambition concept with career success in the workplace, it may be possible for organizations to take advantage of the ambition concept by assessing and managing an employee's career development accordingly as a means to retain a high-performing workforce. Thus, this study seeks to elucidate the potential value of organizations being aware of and more actively managing the ambition concept.**

Appendix J: Institutional Review Board Approval

UNIVERSITY OF
ARKANSAS.

To:	Jeff Bean BELL 4188
From:	Douglas J Adams, Chair IRB Expedited Review
Date:	02/26/2021
Action:	**Expedited Approval**
Action Date:	02/26/2021
Protocol #:	2101309611
Study Title:	Understanding the Importance of Ambition in the Workplace
Expiration Date:	02/15/2022
Last Approval Date:	

The above-referenced protocol has been approved following expedited review by the IRB Committee that oversees research with human subjects.

If the research involves collaboration with another institution then the research cannot commence until the Committee receives written notification of approval from the collaborating institution's IRB.

It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to obtain review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without Committee approval. Please submit continuation requests early enough to allow sufficient time for review. Failure to receive approval for continuation before the expiration date will result in the automatic suspension of the approval of this protocol. Information collected following suspension is unapproved research and cannot be reported or published as research data. If you do not wish continued approval, please notify the Committee of the study closure.

Adverse Events: Any serious or unexpected adverse event must be reported to the IRB Committee within 48 hours. All other adverse events should be reported within 10 working days.

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of this study, such as the procedures, the consent forms, study personnel, or number of participants, please submit an amendment to the IRB. All changes must be approved by the IRB Committee before they can be initiated.

You must maintain a research file for at least 3 years after completion of the study. This file should include all correspondence with the IRB Committee, original signed consent forms, and study data.

cc: Vicki Dieffenderfer, Key Personnel