Status as an End: The impact of status goal orientations on individuals' organizational actions

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Abstract

My dissertation investigates how organizational contexts and individual status aspirations (status goal orientations) influence business leaders' behavioral strategies and their impact on performance. In particular, the dissertation focuses on the effects of status goal orientations on unethical and nonproductive behaviors as well as harmful interpersonal attributions such as credit taking. My framework draws on research on self-presentation and dishonesty which posits that actors attempt to influence the reactions of a particular audience by deceptively creating a preferred image of themselves to signal superior competence in order to obtain desired outcomes in a status order. Additionally, I investigate the types of hierarchies that are most vulnerable to the loose coupling of competence and status attainment. This research develops a framework to explain the associations between status goal orientations, status hierarchies, deceptive competence signaling and unethical and nonproductive behaviors while providing the first test of whether status goal orientations employ deceptive competence signaling as a strategy for increasing perceived competence. I conduct five studies that investigate whether there is a positive relationship between status goal orientations and strategies aimed at deceptively signaling competence. In addition, I conduct an additional study to test the influence of contexts that emphasize status attainment and their impact on deceptive competence signaling behaviors. The results suggest that status goal orientations are associated with a pattern of negative behaviors related to unethical performance outcomes and biased interpersonal attributions.

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Dedication

To my wonderful husband Gal Raz whose sacrifice and love have made all of this possible. Thank you for all the love and support you have given me.

To my three daughters Daniela, Lital and Tamar who inspire me to be better.

Words cannot express how much I love you all.

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1. Introduction

In 1999, Bernie Ebbers, CEO of WorldCom, facing investor earning expectations and slowing revenue growth, orchestrated an accounting scheme that inflated his company's profits by $11 billion over several years. Such ethical violations by CEOs attract considerable attention from shareholders, the media, and other external audiences who are taken aback at how high status individuals succumb to such ethical lapses. Yet, not all CEOs facing similar circumstances behaved as Ebbers did. For example, facing the same adverse market conditions as WorldCom, former AT&T CEO Michael Armstrong lowered earnings projections and cut costs in a legitimate attempt to gain credibility with investors (Blumenstein & Grant, 2004). Rather than being celebrated for the tough choices he made, Armstrong lost credibility and took a status and reputational hit and his company's perceived value dropped precipitously. This outcome suggests that features of the context may, more often than not, reward unethical actions. Yet, less attention has been given to the type of contexts that make individuals most vulnerable to ethical lapses. In fact, CEOs are frequently placed in contexts where investor expectations and market conditions dictate performance outcomes that can only be achieved through non-legitimate means. How individuals react to attain and prevent loss of their perceived value is the subject of this investigation. I propose that variations in both the distribution of status rewards across contexts and individuals' status aspirations have important ethical, performance and interpersonal implications.

In an effort to rise within a status hierarchy, individuals must negotiate the demands of what is deserving of high standing and how this is best achieved. Status is broadly understood as an elite position in a social hierarchy that is conferred on the basis of the respect of evaluators with judgments of competence acting as the basis of conferred respect in organizations (Berger, Fisek,

Norman, & Zelditch Jr, 1977; Berger & Zelditch, 1985; Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Overbeck, Correll, & Park, 2005; Sauder, Lynn, & Podolny, 2012). A growing number of researchers have argued that while status should reflect a real difference in merit and relative competence, status can deviate from competence especially when individuals strive to conform to others' performance expectations (Lynn, Podolny, & Tao, 2009). However, the literature has not addressed the specific circumstances in which competence can become decoupled from status, specifically, how objective competence can deviate from perceptions of competence.

In the current research, my goal is to explain the relationship between individual preferences for status (i.e. status goal orientations) and choosing the easiest and least costly path to signal competence, regardless of whether that path is ethical and productive. In addition, I attempt to investigate the types of hierarchies that are most vulnerable to the loose coupling of competence and status. I suggest that the importance of signaling competence lies not only in what people are willing to do to attain and maintain positions of status, but also in the contextual requirements that influence their perceptions of what it takes to attain and maintain status positions.

My framework draws on research on self-presentation which posits that actors attempt to influence the reactions of a particular audience by creating a preferred image of themselves when the audience can provide them with opportunities to obtain desired outcomes (Baumeister, 1982; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Schlenker, 2012). Specifically, self-presentation theory suggests that individuals are guided by the values and beliefs of others and are influenced by social pressure (Carver & Scheier, 1985; Snyder, 1987). In addition, I draw on research on unethical behavior which finds that financial incentives promote dishonesty (Gino & Ariely, 2012; Gino, Ayal, & Ariely, 2009). When competence is difficult to evaluate, its acquisition is costly, and the

attainment of status is highly valued and has expected benefits, I argue that competence can become decoupled from status as actors create their own interpretation of what they need to be or do to elicit favorable judgments from others. More broadly, this research contributes to a better understanding of the links between status goal orientations, status hierarchies, deceptive competence signaling and unethical and nonproductive behaviors while providing the first test of whether status goal orientations employ deceptive competence signaling as a strategy for increasing perceived competence. I conduct five studies that investigate whether there is a positive relationship between status goal orientations and strategies aimed at deceptively signaling competence. In addition, I conduct an additional study to test the influence of contexts that emphasize status attainment and their impact on deceptive competence signaling behaviors.

2. Status Goal Orientation: Theoretical Development and Empirical Tests

2.1. Defining Status Goal Orientation

This dissertation puts forth the construct of status goal orientation (SGO) and defines it as an underlying pattern of beliefs and actions that result from pursuing specific goals related to attaining an elite position in a social hierarchy. The status goal orientation addresses the reasons why individuals may want to attain status, the approach they take to get it, and the standards they use to evaluate their performance (Button, Mathieu, & Zajac, 1996; DeShon & Gillespie, 2005; C. Dweck, 1989; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996; Wolters, Yu, & Pintrich, 1996). The construct of goal orientation was originally developed in the educational psychology literature to explain differences in learning (Diener & Dweck, 1980; C. S. Dweck, 1975). It has been theorized to reflect both a stable individual difference (i.e., Pintrich & Schunk, 1996) and a situational specific state that depends on a particular context allowing it to be both measured and manipulated depending on the research question (DeShon & Gillespie, 2005). Since goal

orientation has typically been used in the study of achievement contexts, this is the first use of goal orientations applied to hierarchical contexts and is explicitly related to the pursuit of extrinsic goals. Extrinsic goals require the judgment of others and are not considered an end in and of themselves but focus on obtaining external rewards (Kasser & Ryan, 1996). For example, a person adopting a status goal orientation should focus more on seeking external rewards such as wealth, influence and power instead of internal growth goals such as self-actualization and mastery (Kasser & Ryan, 1996).

Considering the benefits of being at the top of the hierarchy, it is not surprising that goals associated with the attainment of status have been found to be pervasive and occur in most societies and across all organizations (Bendersky & Hays, 2012; Bendersky & Shah, 2012; Frank, 1985; Gruenfeld & Tiedens, 2010; Hogan & Hogan, 1991; Loch, Huberman, & Stout, 2000). Researchers have speculated that status is sought out as entitlement to hierarchical rewards and as an end in itself (Ball, Eckel, Grossman, & Zame, 2001; Bendersky & Shah, 2012; Heffetz & Frank, 2008; Magee & Galinsky, 2008). For example, evolutionary and sociological arguments cite greater rewards for those at the top of the hierarchy such as greater reproductive success, fitness (defined as one's off spring reaching maturity), control and influence over material resources such as food, mates and group decisions (Cheng, Tracy, & Henrich, 2010; Frank, 1985; Hogan & Hogan, 1991; Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Van Vugt, 2006). Whereas these rewards have appeal to most people, individuals with high levels of status goal orientations may be more motivated than others to pursue these rewards (Bendersky & Shah, 2012; Flynn, Reagans, Amanatullah, & Ames, 2006; Overbeck et al., 2005).

In order to attain sought after rewards, status goal orientations should be associated with goals aimed at rising within a status hierarchy. Status hierarchies are an ordered ranking of

individuals based on conferred respect where those at the top of the hierarchy have more access and are entitled to unequal rewards and valued resources (Frank, 1985; Gould, 2003; Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Ridgeway & Walker, 1995). In most work groups and organizations, conferred respect is based on possession of a desirable characteristic, often a relevant skill, ability, or competence, where higher-ranked individuals are presumed and judged to have superior characteristics to others of lower social rank (Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Ridgeway & Bourg, 2004). Specifically, individuals judged to have the most competence relevant to the needs of the group should be conferred the greatest respect (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009; Cheng, Tracy, Foulsham, Kingstone, & Henrich, 2013; Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Overbeck et al., 2005).

Because conferred respect does have a great impact on one's position in the hierarchy, it makes sense that most people would want to be seen as competent. In organizations, competence has been defined as individuals' capacity to affect their environment and attain valued outcomes through their effectiveness, ability, and skills and is associated with intrinsic motivation (Dweck & Elliott, 1983; Ryan & Deci, 2000; White, 1959). On the other hand, status has been defined as social respect, recognition, importance, prestige and admiration where need fulfillment is dependent on other people and thus, reflects extrinsic motivation (Anderson, John, Keltner, & Kring, 2001; Anderson & Kilduff, 2009; Fiske, 2010; Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003; Magee & Galinsky, 2008). Competence, both perceived and actual, plays a critical role in the conferment of status, and has been treated as a taken-for-granted element of status. However, in order to better understand the extrinsic nature of status goal orientations, it is important to disentangle the intrinsic goals associated with growth and ability from the extrinsic one of attaining an elite position in a hierarchy.

Ideally, when status is congruent with competence, status should reflect a real difference in merit. However, in most organizations, the causal link between an individual's perceived performance contributions and their actual competence is imprecise and must be inferred by others. This can cause status to become socially constructed and decoupled from competence (Lynn et al., 2009). This is more likely to occur in situations that are ambiguous and uncertain and where competence becomes hard to measure (Lynn et al., 2009; Owens & Sutton, 2001). When this happens, individuals will use social cues to signal their competence (Azoulay, Stuart, & Wang, 2013). In particular, status rewards may be based on judgments regarding relative competence that may not be an accurate reflection of an individuals' underlying abilities (Gould, 2003). For example, status expectation states theory and status characteristics theory argue that individuals make performance expectations of others based on criteria such as past task performance, job title, education and stereotypes of demographic characteristics (Berger, Cohen, & Zelditch Jr, 1972; Berger & Zelditch, 1985; Magee & Galinsky, 2008). The conferral of status has been associated with these performance expectations and characteristics (Magee & Galinsky, 2008), and suggests that it may be possible for individuals to influence the subjective interpretation of their objective performance.

2.2. Self- Presentation

Because status is based on the subjective assessment of others, it follows that those focused on status goal orientations engage in self-presentation behaviors that are socially visible and influence perceptions that impact status conferment. Self-presentation is generally defined as an attempt by individuals to portray themselves favorably to important others by creating a preferred impression (Goffman, 1959; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Schlenker, 2012). Evidence from impression management literature suggests that individuals use cues to influence others'

perceptions of their competence (Anderson & Willer, 2014; Baumeister, 1982; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). For example, studies of job candidates who used self-presentation strategies effectively found that they received more favorable evaluations and were perceived as more likable, competent and qualified even with similar job qualifications (Barrick, Shaffer, & DeGrassi, 2009; Ferris & Judge, 1991; Gilmore, Stevens, Harrell-Cook, & Ferris, 1999).

While individuals can and do manage their impressions to convey an accurate self-image, I concentrate on the use of self-presentation to convey a false impression. Indeed, empirical investigations have found that job applicants have lied during a job application and interview process in order to appear more qualified (Weiss & Feldman, 2006). In organizations, individuals may find themselves in contexts where there is ambiguity about how to measure and quantify task excellence. Such contexts provide actors opportunities to control and shape their impressions. In particular, actors face a choice regarding whether to manipulate this uncertainty by creating an impression of superior competence via two separate avenues: engage solely in self-presentation that deceptively signals competence and not match true abilities or attempt to acquire true competence and face the possibility of failure. To the extent that an actor's ability to acquire competence is limited, difficult or costly (i.e., inability to deliver, ineffective on a task, mistakes), the ability to alter other-party perceptions by signaling superior competence may affect one's outcomes and rank in a status order. But attempts to improve the social status of the self by signaling competence without actual possession of it entails dishonesty, suggesting an ethical dilemma requiring individuals to weigh the benefit of self-interest with the self-image of acting unethically (Gino & Ariely, 2012; Gino et al., 2009).

2.3. Dishonesty

Research on unethical behavior has explored conditions under which individuals behave dishonestly for monetary, power and status rewards (i.e., Gino, Krupka, & Weber, 2012; Gneezy, 2005). Situations where individuals can justify benefitting themselves financially have been found to promote dishonesty. For example, laboratory experiments have shown that people cheat slightly when they think they can get away with it (Gino et al., 2009; Mazar, Amir, & Ariely, 2008). In these experiments, in order to earn more money, participants cheated on a task but only 10 to 20% above their real performance (Ayal & Gino, 2011). Other research has found that individuals will lie about the outcome of a die roll in order to earn more money when primed with power (Gino & Ariely, 2012; Lammers, Stapel, & Galinsky, 2010). Furthermore, self-interest has been related to cheating on a performance task when the sole incentive was the promise of public acknowledgment of the "winner" of the task (Pascual-Ezama, Prelec, & Dunfield, 2013).

Similar to the above research, I explore unethical behavior in situations where cheating and minimizing expended effort can yield better outcomes. My specific focus is on how a status goal orientation enhances the relationship between unethical and unproductive behaviors and self-interest. That is, I study what happens when status goal orientated individuals have the opportunity to successfully signal competence by minimizing expended effort and by lying. Because status goal orientated individuals are more concerned than average with their relative standing in a hierarchy, they may feel pressure to demonstrate superior competence and avoid failure. In fact, studies in the education literature suggest that student who are focused on developing their abilities will cheat less than students who are focused on demonstrating their

abilities by achieving high grades (Anderman & Murdock, 2011; J. Weiss, Gilbert, Giordano, & Davis, 1993).

When actors perceive that their audience will find their competence claims believable and competence acquisition is costly or difficult, the predicted consequences is that individuals will choose to engage in deceptive competence signaling by constructing a preferred image. In short, I expect status goal orientations to be positively associated with unethical and unproductive behaviors when the evaluation of competence is difficult and an opportunity exists to manage one's impressions.

2.4. Status Contexts

As mentioned previously, certain contexts may have an important effect on the behavior of the individuals within them. It has been theorize that one of the functions of hierarchies is to motivate individuals by providing them with incentives to attain status (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). These incentives have positive as well as negative consequences. For example, functional accounts of hierarchical organizing processes suggest that actors interested in claiming status on a basis other than superior competence will be prevented from doing so (Anderson & Willer, 2014). Specifically, those actors that are unable to set aside personal agendas are theorized to be sorted out and assigned lower rank because those more capable of contributing to group orientated goals will be awarded rank (Overbeck et al., 2005). However, other research suggests that groups often fail at selecting the individuals most deserving of status even though they strive to do so (Anderson & Willer, 2014). For example, groups often award status to individual that are dominant or self-confident but are not necessarily the most competent or most committed to group goals (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009; Anderson & Willer, 2014; Edinger & Patterson, 1983).

Several researchers have speculated that business contexts may facilitate unethical conduct through competition and the satisfaction of profit goals that enable individuals to justify their unethical behavior (Dana, Loewenstein, Weber, De Cremer, & Tenbrunsel, 2012). For example, research on soccer teams has found that when there are more incentives to win, teams devote more resources to both scoring goals and dirty play (Garicano & Palacios-Huerta, 2005). Similar research has shown that coworkers have higher rates of sabotage under tournament than under piece-rate compensation structures (Carpenter, Matthews, & Schirm, 2010).

I argue that hierarchies that disproportionately reward the few who outperform the rest send a signal that status is highly valued and the attainment of rank is based on external performance expectations. When this happens, actors will negotiate their value in the hierarchy by attempting to conform to these external performance expectations and evaluations activating status goal orientations (Espeland & Sauder, 2007; Sauder et al., 2012). When status goal orientations are activated, I suggest that deceptive competence signaling will most likely occur when there are clear financial rewards, the context is public, and self-presentation images are believable (Buss & Briggs, 1984).

2.5. Status Contests

In the next section, I introduce interpersonal consequences associated with status goal orientations such as actively taking credit or passively failing to give others proper credit during collaborative endeavors in organizations. In particular, when individuals seek ways to rise within a status hierarchy, they must compete with other actors for recognition and social standing as they are sorted into social positions. While status contests may not be entirely zero sum, as positions and resources become more scarce, an increase in one person's relative standing usually produces a decrease in another person's relative status (Gould, 2003; Heffetz & Frank,

2008). Several researchers have noted the nature of internal organizational competitions as well as a tournament structure which create intense competitions for hierarchical rewards (Menon & Pfeffer, 2003; Rosenbaum, 1976; Rosenbaum, 1979; Rosenbaum, 1984). Successful contest winners not only achieve higher rank but have an opportunity to continue to compete while losers are denied from competing any further and hit career floors (Rosenbaum, 1979).

A status conflict is defined as a dispute over relative rank in a social hierarchy where individuals attempt to prevent the accumulations of status by others who threaten their position (Owens & Sutton, 2001). When rank relations are ambiguous or under challenge, individuals enter a status contest to defend or improve their own social standing and expend effort based on the abilities and efforts of others with whom they are in competition (Frank, 1985; Gould, 2003). In particular, conflict has been suggested as the primary means by which individual set the terms of their social positions with others (Gould, 2003). However, status contests may have unattractive consequences for the larger group. For example, Huberman, Loch, & Önçüler (2004) found that status contests can pit group members against a common group goal as well as cause unproductive behaviors when individuals jockey for position at the expense of work efforts (Loch et al., 2000). For example, a survey of Australian manufacturing has shown that when there were high incentives for promotion, workers expend less effort helping others (Drago & Garvey, 1998). In addition, status conflicts have been shown to inhibit information sharing (Bendersky & Hays, 2012).

In fact, when the cues suggesting which person outranks another are absent or ambiguous, status conflicts are more likely to occur due to the fixed number of winners and losers (Bendersky & Hays, 2012; Frank, 1985; Gould, 2003). Through increased effort, individuals can affect their outcomes in the status contest. However, actors do not necessarily

have to possess or acquire actual competence to win a status contest. Instead, they can create an impression that they have. This may be especially pronounced when competence is difficult to evaluate and measure and there is ambiguity in the performance of a competitor. On a joint performance task, one way to influence decision makers' beliefs about relative performance is to attribute more credit to the self. Said a different way, in order to win a status contest, self-interested actors can undermine their competitors' contribution on a joint output in order to maximize their own contribution and create a superior image.

I add to this literature by arguing that status goal orientated individuals will view collaborative contexts as opportunities to signal competence to increase their relative standing. As a consequence, status goal orientated individuals will perceive others as competitive threats instead of valuable partners. Frank (1985) asserts that individuals face a choice about improving their rank (1985, p. 8), "we are in a position to choose the level at which we conduct our contests for position." In particular, in joint performance situations where there is ambiguity regarding responsibility on the outcome of a task, status goal orientations will be associated with deceptive competence signaling such as biased interpersonal attributions in an effort to gain a competitive advantage over perceived opponents.

2.6. Hypotheses

Overall, my research explores the conditions under which status goal orientations are associated with behaving dishonestly, unproductively and unfairly in interpersonal collaborations. In particular, I expect a positive relationship between status goal orientations and dishonest and unproductive behavior when status rewards, such as monetary incentives, are present (Hypothesis 1). I also expect the same positive relationship to hold when monetary rewards are absent. Research has demonstrated that conferred respect is enough to tempt people

to cheat (Pascual-Ezama et al., 2013). I suggest that even when rewards are not explicit, status goal orientations will be associated with strategies signaling competence because of a concern with a creating an image of competence. In addition to dispositional status goal orientations, I expect the same positive relationship to hold in the case of primes that automatically activate status goal orientations. Studies have demonstrated that activated status motives and primes in general can influence behavior (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999; Griskevicius, Tybur, & Van den Bergh, 2010). Further, I expect that contexts that value status attainment will be more likely to activate status goal orientations enabling deceptive competence signaling and dishonesty (Hypothesis 2). Finally, I suggest that status goal orientations will be positively associated with biased interpersonal attributions (Hypothesis 3) and that this relationship will be moderated by threat (Hypothesis 3A).

2.7.Overview of Empirical Studies

The six studies that follow test my predictions that status goal orientations are associated with deceptive competence signaling. In five studies, participants have the opportunity to signal their competence dishonestly and earn a monetary reward. In studies one and three, status goal orientations are measured as an individual difference and are tested to see whether they are positively associated with minimizing expended effort and cheating (H1). In the second study, I remove the monetary reward in order to rule out the possibility that status goal orientations are associated with a monetary deficient and test whether dispositional status goal orientations are positively associated with cheating (H1). In study four, I prime a status deficit mindset which activates status goal orientations and a status munificence mindset, which mitigates status goal orientations; I then examine whether the status deficit mindset is positively associated with cheating when a monetary reward is present (H1). In the fifth study, I examine whether a context

that values status attainment is positively associated with dishonesty. In particular, I test whether contexts that promote status attainment will activate status goal orientations and ensuing dishonest behaviors (H2). Finally, in the sixth study, I test whether dispositional status goal orientations are associated with signaling competence through biased interpersonal attributions on a joint task (H3) and whether feeling threatened moderates this relationship (H3A).

2.7.1. Study 1

The present study tests the effect of status goal orientations on expended effort and cheating on a high effort task. Embedded in my argument is a strong assumption that cheating is a strategy that can be used to signal competence when success on a task does not depend solely on expended effort. In addition, my argument assumes that status goal orientated individuals engage in a task with the aim of earning an extrinsic reward. In particular, self- determination theory has demonstrated that extrinsic goals can undermine intrinsic goals such as those associated with acquiring competence (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Deci & Ryan, 1991). In this study, I examine whether status goal orientations will promote dishonesty on an unsolvable anagram task that presents participants with an opportunity to be successful by cheating and minimizing expended effort. The number of unsolvable words that are self-reported solved provides a direct measure of cheating. In addition, the time spent working on the unsolvable anagram task provides a measure of expended effort.

2.7.1.1.Method

Participants. Participants were 272 participants recruited for a paid study from Mechanical Turk (MTurk), an online labor system run by Amazon.com. MTurk reaches large numbers of willing participants and is considered more representative of the U.S. population than

other standard Internet samples and more diverse than undergraduate samples. In addition, the data obtained from Amazon Turk is as reliable as those obtained via traditional methods (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011; Goodman, Cryder, & Cheema, 2013). Participants ranged in age from 19 to 76, with a mean age of 37 (165 women, 117 men). Participants received $0.60 for their participation, but were told that they could receive an additional $0.30 based on their performance on the study task. All participants were screened with a one-question check to verify that they were paying attention. Participants who did not pass the attention check were excluded from the study.

Procedure. Participants in the initial study were given a partially unsolvable anagram task, adapted from Eisenberger & Shank, (1985) that allowed for monitoring of cheating. Participants were given instructions on the task, which involved unscrambling letters in order to form a word. Participants were given a total of 7 scrambled words, 3 of which were unsolvable, and 4 of which were easy (e.g., aewtr; Tresselt & Mayzner, 1966). Participants were given a practice anagram with its solution. Then, they were instructed to solve as many as possible and indicate how many anagrams they were able to solve. No time limit was specified. Because participants only had to indicate the number of words solved without providing their solutions, the opportunity existed to cheat on the task. In addition, participants were given the following instructions: "There are 7 word scrambles in this task. We will award a bonus for words solved above 4, which would be superior performance. We will award bonuses based on the following criteria**:** 5 words solved, bonus of $0.10, 6 words solved, bonus of $0.20, 7 words solved, bonus of $0.30." The answers were coded as follows: 0 for 4 words and under, 1 for 5 words, 2 for 6 words, and 3 for 7 words.

2.7.1.2.Measures

Goal Items. After completion of the anagram task, participants were asked to fill out six goal items in order to assess dispositional status goal orientations that were presented in random order. The goal items were derived from the results of a Q-sort used to decouple the extrinsic and intrinsic elements associated with the attainment of status[1]. Based on the Q-sort results, a status goal orientation scale was developed related to influence, power and material resources. In fact, both power, defined as "the asymmetrical control over valued resources," and influence have been posited to be consequences or outcomes of status attainment (Blader & Chen, 2011; Cheng et al., 2013; Magee & Galinsky, 2008) and used in measures of dispositional status motives (Fragale, Sumanth, Tiedens, & Northcraft, 2012). Moreover, research has found that participants associate the cause of status with financial success (Cohn, Fehr, & Maréchal, 2014), and the aspiration for financial rewards has been theorized to represent extrinsic goals (Kasser & Ryan, 1993; Kasser & Ryan, 1996).

The status goal orientation scale consists of 6 items and given to current participants. The item related to power (i.e., "If push comes to shove, I would rather direct my team's activities myself rather than have someone else organize them") was taken from the Achievement

[1] The Q-sort had participants rank 100 statements describing the behaviors of both high status and high competence individual. These statements were derived from a pretest using a similar internet population on MTurk. The Q-sort asked participants to highlight areas of similarity and divergence between competence and status. Results from the Q-sort indicate that the most characteristic items reflecting status when competence is sorted out, relate to socioeconomic wealth, power and influence.

Motivation Scale (AMS; Cassidy & Lynn, 1989; Maner & Mead, 2010). The influence and material resource (i.e., wealth) items were taken from the Need for Social Status Scale (Flynn et al., 2006) and adapted from the Aspiration Index (Kasser & Ryan, 1993; Kasser & Ryan, 1996). Sample items include "It annoys me when other people make more money than me" and "It would please me to have a position of wealth and social standing" (see Appendix A for the complete list of these items). Participants were instructed to rate the extent to which they agreed with each item on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

After participants completed the status goal orientation goal items, they were paid a $0.30 bonus and thanked for their participation.

Dependent Measures. Cheating was measured as the number of unsolvable anagrams that were reported as solved. Because there were only four solvable anagrams out of seven, dishonesty was measured as any number higher than four and was coded into four distinct categories as follows: 1 for five words, 2 for six words, and 3 for seven words. Honesty was conservatively measured as any number equal to and below 4 (participants who reported 4 may have actually solved less than 4) and was coded as 0.

Total time spent on the task (measured in minutes) served as a measure of expended effort on the task and was log transformed as the values had a significant right skew where the majority of the cases were bunched at lower values.

2.7.1.3.Results

There were no effects of participants' gender and age, so I did not differentiate gender and age when reporting my results.

The percentage of participants reporting a number greater than 4 (i.e., cheating) was 64%, (*106 participants*). In total, 25% of the cheaters (26 participants) cheated to the full extent (category 3, reporting 7 words solved), 12% of the cheaters (13 participants) cheated partially (category 2, reporting 6 words solved) and 63% of the cheaters (67 participants) cheated a little (category 1, reporting 5 words solved).

The status goal orientation scale had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.78 and was used to predict the level of cheating. I employed a multinomial logistic regression as the nature of the cheating response made more usual statistical procedures such as a linear regression and an ordinal logistic regression less appropriate. The multinomial logistic regression on the category of cheating dependent variable (categories 0, 1, 2, and 3) with the status goal orientation scale as a continuous independent variable and time expended on the task (log transformed) as continuous control variable is presented in Table 1. I conducted a two-way interaction between status goal orientation and time expended which was not significant and was dropped in the subsequent analysis. The likelihood of cheating to the full extent (category 3) increased as the status goal orientation scale increased ($b_{category3} = .554$, $SE_{category3} = 0.219$, $p_{category3} = .012$) but decreased as the log transformed time expended increased ($b_{category3} = -0.755$, $SE_{category3} = 0.201$, $p_{category3} = .000$). Results revealed that for every one unit increase in the status goal orientation scale, the odds of cheating to the full extent (category 3) increased by 72%. Additionally, as the time spent on the task increased (log transformed), the odds of cheating to the full extent decreased by 54%. There were no significant results found between status goal orientations, time expended and categories 1 and 2 of cheating.

2.7.1.4. Discussion

The results reported here provide initial evidence of the relationship between the status goal orientation scale and cheating on a task. In particular, participants who cheated to the full extent were more likely to spend less time on the task and to have scored higher on the status goal orientation scale than were participants who did not cheat.

Because we offered a monetary reward, there is a possibility that participants cheated because they felt the potential for monetary gain and not necessarily from the desire to signal competence. In the study that follows, I remove the monetary bonus to test whether status goal orientations are positively linked to cheating even when there are no associated monetary rewards for doing so.

2.7.2. Study 2

In the second study I test for a positive relationship between status goal orientations, cheating and minimizing expended effort when there is no monetary incentive present.

2.7.2.1.Method

Participants. Participants were 255 internet participants recruited from MTurk for a paid study. Participants received $0.60 for their participation. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 75, with a mean age of 35 (142 women, 113 men).

Procedure. Participants were given the same anagram task as in Study 1 that allowed them to cheat. However, there was no mention of a bonus for superior performance. After completing the anagram task, participants were asked to complete the same status goal orientation items described in Study 1.

2.7.2.2.Results

There were no effects of participants' age and gender, so I do not discuss these variables further.

The percentage of participants claiming a higher number than 4 was 34%, (*65 participants*). In total, 14% (9 participants) of the cheaters cheated to the full extent (category 3, reporting 7 words solved), 15% of the cheaters (10 participants) cheated partially (category 2, reporting 6 words solved) and 71% (46 participants) of the cheaters cheated a little (category 1, reporting 5 words solved). Unlike study 1, participants had less of a monetary incentive to cheat and fewer of them did so.

The status goal orientation scale had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.77. A multinomial logistic regression analysis on the category of cheating (categories 0, 1, 2, and 3) testing whether it would predict the category of cheating (categories 0, 1, 2, and 3) with the status goal inventory and time expended on the task (log transformed) as continuous independent variables is summarized in Table 2. While the log transformed time variable was not significantly different for any category of cheating, the likelihood of cheating to the full extent (category 3) increased as the status goal inventory increased, ($b_{category3} = .758$, $SE_{category3} = 0.334$, $p_{category3} = .02$). Put another way, for every one unit increase in the status goal orientation scale, the relative risk ratio which is the probability of cheating to the full extent is 2.133. As in study 1, I did not find a significant relationship between status goal orientations, time expended and categories 1 and 2 of cheating.

2.7.2.3.Discussion

The results from Study 2 reinforce the results of Study 1, supporting my prediction that status goal orientations are related to dishonesty by creating a preferred image of competence

and not because of a potential monetary gain. In this study, I did not find a significant relationship between expended effort and cheating. This may be a result of the low levels of cheating at the highest level (9 participants in category 3) and lower levels of expended effort in general by most of the participants as compared to study 1 where there was a monetary incentive.

2.7.3. Study 3

In the first study, I found evidence of a positive relationship between status goal orientations, cheating on an anagram task, and minimizing expended effort. Because the anagram task was unsolvable, participants did not have an ethical route in which to acquire competence. Thus, they faced a choice of either deceptively signaling competence or not signaling competence. In this study, I test these relationships again using a solvable but high effort task which creates a choice for participants between two avenues for signaling competence: deceptively signaling competence or expending more effort in order to acquire competence.

2.7.3.1. Method

Participants. Participants were 89 participants recruited from MTurk for a paid study. Participants ranged in age from 20 to 63, with a mean age of 31 (40% women, 60% men). Participants received $0.50 for their participation, but were told that they could receive an additional $0.50 based on their performance on the study task.

Procedure. Participants completed an online survey that consisted of both a problem solving task and the status goal inventory used in Study 1. Participants performed the problem solving task first which provided them with an opportunity to cheat.

Task. Participants were given a problem-solving task adapted from (Mazar et al., 2008) which consisted of 10 matrices each based on a set of 12 three-digit numbers. Participants were

given two minutes to find the two numbers per matrix that added up to 10. The two minute time limit was not enough time to solve all 10 matrices (see Gino & Ariely, 2011; Mazar et al., 2008). However, there was a solvable solution to each matrix.

Participants were given a sample matrix with its solution. They were then instructed to try to solve as many matrices as they could in two minutes. All ten matrices were presented at once and participants were instructed to keep track of the number of matrices they were able to complete in order to self-report their answers at the end of the study. In addition, participants read that they would earn $0.05 for successfully solving each matrix for a possible total bonus of $0.50. Further, participants were informed that they could move ahead and report their results at any time prior to the end of the two minute time limit even if they did not solve all 10 matrices. If participants ended their session in less than two minutes or if they worked for the entire two minutes, they were given an option of receiving an extra minute to work on the puzzles. If participants chose to continue, they were shown the matrices again and given an extra minute to solve them. Upon completion, participants were asked to self-report the bonus they earned from a range of $0.05 to $0.50. Participants who did not select the extra time, were taken directly to the bonus self-report page. Because participants only had to indicate the bonus they earned without providing their solutions, the opportunity existed for them to cheat.

All participants were paid a $0.50 bonus at the completion of the study.

2.7.3.2. Measures

Dependent Measures. Time in minutes spent on the task measured expended effort. There were 4 possible categories: participants who spent less than the initial 2 minutes allotted time and did not request additional time, participants who spent less than the initial 2 minutes allotted time but did request additional time, participants who spent the entire 2 minutes on the

task and did not request additional time, and participants who spent the entire 2 minutes on the task and did request additional time. There were 6 participants out of a total of 19 who spent less than the initial 2 minutes on the task but did ask for additional time (maximum time was 98 seconds for those requesting additional time vs. a maximum of 111 seconds for those not requesting additional time). However, the total time spent on the task for all 6 participants fell below the 2 minute threshold and their time expended was coded with all participants who spent less than 2 minutes on the task. Time expended on the task was coded in the following manner: less than two minutes spent on the task was coded as 1 (n = 19) and had an average time of 70.56 seconds, two minutes spent on the task was coded as 2 (n = 35) and more than two minutes spent on the task was coded as 3 (n = 35) and had an average time of 177.52 seconds.

Additionally, in order to distinguish between participants who expended less effort toward the task but did not cheat vs. those who did, bonus claimed per minute of time was used to assess cheating. Specifically, the amount of bonus per minute should be less for participants who spent less than 2 minutes on the task than those who spent more than 2 minutes on the task as previous studies have shown that 2 minutes is not sufficient time to solve all the matrices (see Gino & Ariely, 2011; Mazar et al., 2008).

2.7.3.3.Results

There were no effects of participants' gender and age, so I did not differentiate gender and age when reporting my results.

The percentage of participants spending less than 2 minutes on the task was 21%, (19 *participants*), and the average number of matrices reported as solved was 7.47. The percentage of participants spending 2 minutes on the task was 39%, (35 participants), and the average

number of matrices reported as solved was 5.34. Finally, the percentage of participants requesting an extra minute and spending more than 2 minutes on the task was also 39% (35 participants), and the average number of matrices reported as solved was 5.97.

The status goal inventory had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82.

Time Expended on the Task. I used an ordinal logistic regression analysis because the bimodal nature of the time response made more usual statistical procedures less appropriate. Specifically, most participants spent 2 minutes or 3 minutes on the task with a significant minority of participants spending less than 2 minutes (n=19) suggesting a bimodal nature to the time expended dependent variable. In addition, the normality assumption of the residuals was violated making an ANOVA and classical regression analyses less appropriate. Instead, an ordinal logistic was utilized to see if participants high on the status goal orientation scale were less likely to persist (expend less time) on the task. As expected, the status goal orientation scale was negatively and significantly associated with less time expended on the task $\beta = -0.393$, t (89) = -2.465, p =.01. Specifically, as the status goal orientation scale increased by one unit, the odds of observing participants taking less than two minutes on the task (category 1) vs. taking 2 minutes or more (categories 2 and 3) are multiplied by 0.675. Put another way, as the status goal orientation scale increased by one unit, the odds of observing participants taking more than two minutes on the task (category 3) vs. taking two minutes or less (categories 2 and 1) decreases by 0.675 times.

Figure 1 shows the probability of time spent by status goal orientation scale. For values of status goal orientation of 4 and higher, the most likely amount of time spent by participants on the task is 2 minutes and the least likely amount of time is 3 minutes. For values at the very peak of the scale, the most likely amount of time for participants to spend is less than 2 minutes.

Bonus per Minute. The mean of bonus per minute by category of time is: $0.53 for category 1 (less than 2 minutes), $0.13 for category 2 (2 minutes), and $0.10 for category 3 (more than 2 minutes). The mean of total bonus reported by category is: $0.37 for category 1, $0.27 for category 2, and $0.30 for category 3. A log transformation of the Bonus per Minute was calculated as the values had a significant right skew where the majority of the cases were bunched at lower values. Next, I conducted a regression analysis to test whether status goal orientation was associated with cheating. As predicted, there was a positive and significant relationship between the status goal orientation scale and the log transformed bonus per minute, $\beta = 0.186$, SE = 0.068, t (87) = 2.743, p =.007. For a one unit increase in the status goal orientation scale, I expect to see a 20% (exponent of 0.186) increase in the bonus per minute reported by participants.

2.7.3.4. Discussion

These results demonstrate that the status goal orientation scale is related to less expended effort on a high effort task. In addition, the status goal orientation was associated with higher reported rates of bonus per minute. Taken together, these findings suggest that participants who scored high on the status goal orientation scale were more likely to minimize expended effort but report high levels of success. Because the task required greater effort (time expended) in order to solve the problems, these results add to the results of studies 1 and 2 by finding that status goal orientated participants do not resort to cheating only when they perceive that competence acquisition is an impractical or impossible option.

2.7.4. Study 4 Priming Status Goal Orientation

In study 4, I move beyond a dispositional construal of status goal orientations and consider whether contextual cues can promote status goal orientations and ensuing dishonest

actions. In particular, I promote a status goal deficit in which individuals are prompted to feel or think that they are attributed less status than they deserve from an important reference group. I expect that when primed to think of their lack of status, individuals will feel a negative status gap between where they think they ought to be vs. where others perceive them to be. On the other hand, I define status goal munificence as a state where individuals feel or think that they are attributed more status relative to others in an important reference group. I expect that individuals primed to think about a surplus of status will feel a positive status gap which mitigates the activation of status goal orientations. Specifically, I argue that individuals in a state of status goal munificence perceive a satisfactory alignment between their expectations of status and a perceived status surplus. Therefore, I predict that a state of status goal deficit activates status goal orientations that ensue deceptive competence signaling when competence acquisition is difficult or costly.

2.7.4.1. Method

Participants. Participants were 173 internet participants recruited from MTurk for a paid study. Participants received $0.60 for their participation. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 68, with a mean age of 32 (98 women, 75 men).

Procedure. The study had two between-subjects conditions: status goal deficit and munificence. Participants were first asked to think about their status at work relative to a peer or a junior colleague. Status was described in terms of the goal items used in study 1. The type of status condition participants read was randomly assigned. In the status deficit condition, participants read the following instructions:

Please recall a particular incident in which another individual or individuals in your network at work, who is either a peer or more junior to you, had more status than you. By status we mean, someone else made more money than you, was wealthier than you, and had more power to direct and influence decisions and outcomes than you did. Please describe this situation in which someone else had more status than you – what happened, how you felt, etc. In the space provided below, try to relive the experience as best as you can by describing the situation you were in and what you were thinking and feeling at the time.

In the status munificence condition, participants read the following instructions:

Please recall a particular incident in which you had more status than another individual or individuals in your network at work who is either a peer or more junior to you. By status we mean, you made more money than they did, you were wealthier than they were, and you had more power to direct and influence decisions and outcomes than they did. Please describe this situation in which you had more status – what happened, how you felt, etc. In the space provided below, try to relive the experience as best as you can by describing the situation you were in and what you were thinking and feeling at the time.

2.7.4.2.Measures

Manipulation Check. Participants' completed two manipulation check items. They were asked to indicate how much status and how much competence they thought other people would afford them on a 7-point Likert scale based on what they read and wrote.

Dependent Variable. Participants performed the same anagram cheating task as in study 1 where only 4 anagrams were solvable. They received the following instructions: "There are 7 word scrambles in this task. While most Amazon Turk workers vary in their ability, most are able to get 5 words or more correct. We will award bonuses based on the following criteria: 5 words solved, bonus of $0.10; 6 words solved, bonus of $0.20; 7 words solved, bonus of $0.30."

The statement to participants that most Amazon Turk workers solve 5 words or more was adapted from Eisenberger & Shank, (1985) and designed to suggest that it is normative and safe to claim solutions at or above 5 words. After completing the anagram task, participants were advised that the anagram task had nothing to do with general intelligence. All participants were paid a $0.30 bonus.

2.7.4.3. Results

There were no effects of participants' gender and age, so I did not differentiate gender and age when reporting my results.

The manipulation checks revealed that participants in the status deficient condition perceived that they had significantly less status (M = 3.744, SD = 1.190) than status munificence participants (M = 4.632, SD = 1.295) ($p < .001$). Additionally, status deficient participants perceived that they had significantly less competence (M = 4.593, SD = 1.349) than status munificence participants (M = 5.333, SD = 1.291) ($p < .001$).

The percentage of participants reporting a number greater than 4 (i.e., cheating) was 50%, (*87 participants*). In total, 26% of the cheaters (23 participants) cheated to the full extent (category 3), 15% of the cheaters (13 participants) cheated partially (category 2) and 59% of the cheaters (51 participants) cheated a little (category 1).

In support of my hypotheses, a multinomial logistic regression analysis revealed that the likelihood of cheating to a partial extent (category 2) was significantly higher ($b_{category2}$ = -1.986, $SE_{category2}$ = 0.799, $p_{category2}$ = .02) and the likelihood of cheating to a full extent (category 3) was marginally higher ($b_{category3}$ = -0.910, $SE_{category3}$ = 0.489, $p_{category3}$ = .06) in the status goal deficit condition.

2.7.4.4. Discussion

The results suggest that a state of status goal deficit is more predictive of cheating than a status goal munificence state.

2.7.5. Study 5 Priming Status Goal Orientation in a Context

In the next study, I explore the impact of contexts that promote status attainment on status goal orientations. In particular, I predict that the presence of a culture that values status attainment coupled with costly competence acquisition will activate status goal orientations and ensuing dishonest behaviors (H2). As a test of my hypothesis, I randomly assigned participants to a status and a control condition. In the status condition, participants believed that if they performed well on the initial (unsolvable) anagram task they would be assigned to the high status (vs. the low status) role on a subsequent task. The high status role was described as being influential with the researchers as well as being admired and respected by previous participants who had been in the role. However, participants were told that both roles involved generating and working with interesting ideas. I predicted that placing participants in a context that emphasized status rewards would activate status goal orientations and lead to cheating.

2.7.5.1.Method

Participants. Participants were 146 internet participants recruited from MTurk for a paid study. Participants received $0.60 for their participation. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 76, with a mean age of 35 (74 women, 72 men).

Procedure. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions (control and status) where they performed the same anagram task as in Study 1. In the status condition, participants read that they would be completing two tasks: a word puzzle (the anagram task) and

a decision making task utilizing a similar experimental paradigm to the one used by Fast, Halevy, & Galinsky, (2012). They were told that in the decision making task, they would work on a study on virtual organizations and be assigned to a consulting firm called "Grow Inc." where they would be assigned to the Idea Producer or Idea Processor role based on their performance in the word puzzle task. Specifically, participants were told that if they performed in the top 20% in the word puzzle, they would be assigned to the Idea Producer role. Both roles involved generating and working with important ideas. However, the Idea Producer role served as the high-status role. Participants read that "previous participants have commented that they had more admiration and respect for the Idea Producer role, and less admiration and respect for the Idea Processor role. In addition, experimenters who have used the Grow Inc. task tend to view participants who get the Idea Producer assignment in higher esteem and typically listen to them more; thus, the Idea Producer role tends to have more influence with the experimenters."

The control condition served as a baseline for the magnitude of cheating when participants had the opportunity to cheat. In the control, participants were given the same instructions as those in the status condition. However, where participants read about performing in the top 20% in the status condition, participants were told, "There will be two role assignments. In both roles, you will be involved in generating and working with important ideas."

Participants were asked to do their best on the word scramble. Finally, regardless of condition, participants read that they would be compensated for their participation but no additional bonus was offered for performance.

2.7.5.2.Results

There was no effect of participants' gender and age, so I did not differentiate gender or age when reporting my results.

The percentage of participants reporting a number greater than 4 (i.e., cheating) was 23%, (*112 participants*). In total, 9% of the cheaters (3 participants) cheated to the full extent (category 3, reporting 7 words solved), 9% of the cheaters (3 participants) cheated partially (category 2, reporting 6 words solved) and 82% of the cheaters (28 participants) cheated a little (category 1, reporting 5 words solved). The overall rate of cheating by condition was 30% in the status condition compared to 16% in the control.

Cheating was measured as the number of unsolvable anagrams that were reported as solved. Because there were only 6 participants reporting 6 words or higher, dishonesty was measured as any number higher than four and was coded as 1. Honesty was conservatively measured as any number equal to and below 4 (participants who reported 4 may have actually solved less than 4) and was coded as 0.

I expected that status goal orientations would be activated by a status context although status goal orientations were not directly measured. As expected, a binary logistic regression on the cheating DV showed a significant effect by condition, $X^2(1, N = 145) = 0.785$, SE = 0.406, p =.053. The odds of cheating are 119% (exponent of 0.785) higher for participants in the status condition than the odds of cheating for participants in the control condition.

2.7.5.3. Discussion

Study 5 provided evidence that contexts that emphasize status rewards can promote dishonesty when an opportunity to tacitly behave unethically is presented.

2.7.6. Study 6 Credit Taking and Status Goal Orientation

In the following study, I sought to demonstrate the relationship between status goal orientations and interpersonal evaluations and attributions of competence and task performance on a joint task. I hypothesize that status goal orientations will be positively associated with attributing less credit to others on a joint task (H3). In particular, I argue that status goal orientated individuals are more likely to perceive a joint task as a status competition and their teammates as competitive threats. As such, I predict that threat will moderate the relationship between status goal orientations and the attribution of credit on a joint task (H3A).

2.7.6.1.Method

Participants. Participants were 278 internet participants recruited from MTurk for a paid study. Participants received $0.60 for their participation and ranged in age from 19 to 69, with a mean age of 30 (110 women, 168 men).

Procedure. Participants were told that they would be working on a task with another "virtual" participant where successful performance could earn them an extra bonus. In reality there was no virtual partner. In order to help participants envision a real partner, participants were asked to imagine someone they know (see threat manipulation below).

The study involved a 3 (Threat, Control, Non-threat) x 1 between-subjects design.

Threat Manipulation. Participants read a prompt in which they were asked to recall a person from their work experience adapted from Menon, Thompson, & Choi, (2006). The type of person they were asked to recall was randomly assigned. In the threat condition, participants read the following instructions:

Please think about people who are in your network at work and who are either peers or more junior to you. Of this network, please consider the people whose positive performance and/or impressive qualifications are enviable and could make you feel a bit uncomfortable because they might be evaluated more favorably than you, (i.e., please think about the people with whom you might get a little competitive either because of their significant progress in the organization, the considerable amount they have accomplished, the high regard that others show them, etc.) Now focus on one particular person who came to mind and write down that person's name, initials, or a nickname.

In the Control condition, participants read the following instructions:

Please think about people who are in your network at work and who are either peers or more junior to you. Now focus on the first person who came to mind. Please write down that person's name, initials, or a nickname.

In the Non-threat condition, participants read the following instructions:

Please think about people who are in your network at work and are either peers or more junior to you. Of this network, please consider the people whose positive performance and/or qualifications do <u>NOT</u> make you feel uncomfortable, (i.e., please think about the people with whom you do not feel even a little competitive because they are not being evaluated with you because you came in a different time to the organization, because you are in different arenas, and/or because you are on different career trajectories.) Now please think of at least one person and write down that person's name, initials, or a nickname.

Next, participants read that they had been assigned to another Amazon Turk worker and given a fictitious worker ID to establish face validity. Participants then read that they should IMAGINE that their virtual team member was the person they had just recalled in order to mimic

a real world scenario where they would be able to meet their teammate (even virtually). The initials or name that the participant entered was automatically inserted by Qualtrics in all subsequent directions and questions.

Task. Participants were given the Bushfire survival simulation in which they had to rank 12 items based on their importance for surviving an Australian bushfire. The Bushfire simulation by Human Synergistics (Gourley, 1997) involves the ranking of 12 items based on their importance to surviving an Australian bushfire. The correct ranking (CR), provided with the instructor materials, is based on the ranking of survival experts. This task, similar to the Desert Survival (Lafferty & Pond, 1974), allows for one to compare his or her ranking with those of certified experts to determine the extent to which the rankings are correct. In these survival tasks, the strategy that one chooses (i.e., to stay or go) is typically reflected in the items that are chosen as the least and most important. Expert decisions typically reflect the counterintuitive strategy of staying.

Participants read a short narrative about a small consulting group in the Australia outback facing a survival situation when a bushfire unexpectedly appears. The participants were told to think of themselves as one of the members of the consulting group as they considered how to rank the items for survival. Participants were then asked to individually complete the rankings. After making individual decisions about what they believed the best ranking to be, participants were shown a screen shot of their "virtual" partner's feedback which provided a hint to the best solution to the task. The hint read as follows: "My initial thoughts are that we really need to stay and protect ourselves. Covering up will be critical and protecting the house. Running away would be crazy."

Participants were then asked to re-rank the items and were advised that it was up to them whether to consider the input from their virtual partner. Participants then submitted a final ranking. Following the ranking, participants were given the solution to the task and a raw score. Participants were then informed how their raw score was calculated and given the following message, "A perfect score would be 0 because it indicates that there was no difference between your ranking and the experts' ranking. Therefore, the lower the overall score, the better." They were then informed that, "Bushfire is a counterintuitive exercise. Most people do not get the right answer. Therefore, we are rating your performance relative to other participants who already performed this task." Participants were then given positive feedback on their performance, "Congratulations! Your team score was in the top 20% of scores."

2.7.6.2. Measures

Independent Measures. Each participant's first and second ranking on the Bushfire task was scored. In order to assess participants' status goal orientation, we included the six goal items from Study 1.

Dependent Measures. Given our interest in the amount of credit individuals gave themselves relative to their teammate, I used discrepancy scores on two key dependent measure adopted from Heilman & Haynes, (2005). The first scale was an attribute rating and measured perceived competence. The second scale measured the perceived degree of influence on task outcome.

A composite scale was created by averaging discrepancy scores on several questions for both of our dependent measures. Each discrepancy score was created by subtracting the rating of the teammate from the rating of self. The competence measure was adopted from Heilman & Haynes (2005) and was based on three items 9-point bipolar adjective scales (competent–

incompetent, productive–unproductive, effective–ineffective). The three difference scores were averaged to create a competence scale. The coefficient alpha for this scale was 0.93.

The influence measure was a composite based on three items adapted from Haynes & Heilman, (2013): “To what extent do you think the final joint outcome has been influenced by the quality of ____ (initials)’s/your own input?” and “To what extent do you think ____ (initials)'s/your input contributed to the team’s joint performance outcome?” and “How would rate ____ (initials)’s/your performance in this survival task” The two difference scores were averaged to create a relative influence scale. The coefficient alpha for this scale was 0.91.

The valence of these measures is meaningful for both the competence and influence measures. A positive discrepancy score indicates a score favoring self, a score of zero indicates no difference in rating between self and other, and a negative score indicates a score favoring one’s teammate. In this study, I expect most of the scores to be positive as the participants were in the more onerous role of taking feedback but making the final decision for the team.

Control Variables. I controlled for initial performance in all the hypothesis tested. Performance was determined by comparing the similarity of the participant’s individual ranking (IR) of the 12 survival items to the correct rankings (CR). Initial ranking scores were calculated by summing the absolute value of the deviation of each of the 12 items’ rankings from that of the certified Bushfire survival experts’ rankings such that higher scores indicate *worse* performance. By controlling for participant’s initial performance measures, I can assess credit attributions independently of how well the participant initially performed on the task. I did not control for final performance scores as all participants received positive feedback regarding their performance.

Manipulation Check. As a manipulation check to assess whether our manipulation induced threat, participants were asked the following three questions adapted from Duguid, (2011): 1) To what extent do you think that your performance could be judged negatively relative to ____ (initials)? 2) If there were other members on your team, to what extent do you think that they might value your ____ (initials)'s input over yours? and 3) If there were other members on your team, to what extent do you think that they might favor ____ (initials) over you? End points were 1 (Not at all) and 7 (Very much). The responses to the three items were averaged (alpha = .84).

2.7.6.3.Results

Manipulation Check. The manipulation checks revealed that participants in the threat condition reported feeling more threatened than in both the control (*M*= 4.472, *SD*=1.014 vs. *M=3.326*, *SD=1.243*) *F* (1,275) = 32.94, *p*<.001 and non-threat condition (M=3.187, SD=1.278) F (1, 275) = 54.306, p <.001.

The status goal orientation scale had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.77 and was used to predict credit attributions favoring the self.

Competence Scale. I employed a regression analysis testing whether the status goal orientation scale was associated with proself competence attributions while controlling for initial performance. As predicted, the status goal orientation scale was positively and significantly associated with attribution of greater proself competence B= 0.347, SE=.119, t=2.909, p < .01. Consistent with Hypothesis 3, participants scoring high on the status goal orientation scale attributed less competence to their virtual team-mate than participants in the control condition.

Next, I tested whether feeling threatened moderated the effect of the status goal orientation on proself competence attributions. Table 3 displays the results of the regression

analysis. As predicted, there was a significant interaction between the threat condition and the status goal orientation in predicting greater proself competence attributions B= 0.827, SE = 0.295, t= 2.800, $p < .01$. To interpret the form of the interaction, I plotted the interaction between status goal orientation and proself competence attributions at each level of the threat manipulation (see Figure 2). When participants felt threatened, high scores on the status goal orientation scale was associated with higher levels of attributing proself competence compared to the control condition. By contrast, when participants did not feel threatened in both the control and non-threat conditions, there was no longer an association with the status goal orientation scale and attributing proself competence.

Finally, I did not find a significant relationship between status goal orientations and proself competence attributions in the non-threat condition. Additionally, I did not find significant differences between the threat and non-threat conditions and status goal orientations on proself competence attributions.

Perceived Influence Scale. I employed a regression analysis testing whether the status goal orientation scale was associated with proself influence attributions while controlling for initial performance. As predicted, the status goal orientation scale was positively and significantly associated with attributing more influence to the self, B = 0.349, SE = 3.14, t = 2.771, $p < .01$. Consistent with Hypothesis 3, participants who scored high on the status goal orientation scale attributed less influence to their virtual teammate than participants in the control condition.

Next, I tested whether feeling threatened moderated the effect of the status goal orientation on attributing greater proself influence attributions. Table 3 displays the results of the regression analysis. As predicted, there was a significant interaction between the threat condition

and the status goal orientation scale in predicting greater proself influence attributions B= 0.871, SE = 0.295, t= 2.800, $p < .01$. To interpret the form of the interaction, I plotted the interaction between status goal orientation and proself influence attributions at each level of the threat manipulation (see Figure 3). When participants scored high on the status orientation scale, feeling threatened was associated with higher levels of attributing the self greater influence on the task compared to the control condition. By contrast, when participants scored low on the status goal orientation scale, feeling threatened was no longer associated with attributing the self greater influence on the task.

Additionally, I found that not feeling threatened moderated the effect of the status goal orientation on proself influence attributions, B = .659, SE = 0.297, t = 2.211, $p < .05$ (see Figure 3). Similarly to the threat condition, participants who scored high on status goal orientations attributed themselves more influence when thinking about someone who was not threatening as compared to the control. There were no significant differences between threat and non-threat conditions and status goal orientation on proself influence attributions.

Actual Influence: Results on perceived influence revealed that participants high on status goal orientations who felt threatened were more likely to attribute greater influence to the self. This raised the question of whether threat and the status goal orientations were associated with actual influence on the task. Actual influence on the task reflects the extent to which the participant relied on the "virtual" team member's general strategy and advice when re-ranking the items the second time. Because the advice given to the participant reflected a general "stay" strategy and did not give specific item rankings, I measured actual influence by examining the relationship between a participant's first rankings and his or her second rankings of the top four and bottom four items listed on the correct rankings (CRs) given by certified Bushfire survival

experts. Previous research by Thomas-Hunt & Phillips, (2004) suggests that these items are the most significant and reflect a change in strategy. For instance, if participants rank the map in the top four items, it reflects a decision to "go", but if participants rank the woolen blankets in the top four items, it reflects a decision to "stay".

I measured influence by counting how many of the top four correct rankings were present in the first and second rankings. I then calculated a deviance score. For example, if participants' initial ranking had 1 item from the correct ranking (i.e. woolen blankets), but the second ranking contained 2 items from the correct rankings (i.e., woolen blankets and leather boots) I calculated a positive influence score of 1. In addition, I counted whether the bottom four correct rankings were present in participant's top 4 items in both their first and second rankings and then took a deviance score. For example, if participants' initial ranking contained 2 of the bottom correct rankings (i.e., keys and map) in their top 4 items, but the second ranking contained only 1 item, I calculated a positive influence score of 1. Both influence scores were added together and divided by 8 in order to obtain scores between -1 and +1.

Using a regression analysis testing whether the status goal orientation and the threat conditions were associated with actual influence, I found that participants in the threat condition were less receptive to advice than participants in the control, $B = -0.062$, $SE = .032$, $t = -1.937$, $p = .054$. I did not find an effect for the status goal orientation.

2.7.6.4. Discussion

Study 6 provided evidence that status goal orientations are associated with credit taking behaviors and threat moderates this effect. Further, I found that participants who were threatened were less likely to take advice than participants in the control condition; threatened participants who were high in status goal orientations also took more credit for the favorable outcome. In

addition, I found evidence that the non-threat condition moderates the effect of status goal orientations on proself influence attributions. While I did not predict this effect, the finding may suggest that status goal orientations will engage in competence signaling by undermining a teammate that they consider "weaker". Low expectations of their partners may have led participants to give less credit than they objectively deserved.

2.8. General Discussion

I started this research to determine whether status goal orientations are associated with deceptive competence signaling. In particular, I investigated whether status goal orientations are predictive of minimizing expended effort, dishonesty and unfair interpersonal behaviors. Recent research has highlighted some of the potential negative and self-interested outcomes associated with status and its motives. For example, evidence from research on pro-environmental products and status incentives highlight self-interested outcomes when status motives are not inhibited (Griskevicius et al., 2010; Pascual-Ezama et al., 2013). Additional research has found an association between power and dishonesty (Lammers et al., 2010). Similarly, I find that status goal orientations are associated with a pattern of negative behaviors related to unethical performance outcomes and biased interpersonal attributions.

The current studies examine the relationship between status goal orientations, negative behavioral outcomes, and a contextual framework that places value on the attainment of status. My aim was to show that the status goal orientated employ deceptive competence signaling to create a preferred image which may sacrifice ethical, moral, productive and interpersonal considerations. In the first study, I found a significant relationship between dispositional measures of status goal orientations, dishonesty and the minimizing of expended effort when monetary incentives were present. In the second study, I showed that dispositional status goal

orientations were associated with dishonesty even when monetary incentives were not present suggesting that self-presentation goals are associated with signaling competence. The aim of study 3 was to demonstrate that status goal orientations were associated with minimizing expended effort and dishonesty despite the fact that a legitimate albeit costly way to acquire competence existed.

Study 4 explored whether status goal orientations can be situationally manipulated. The findings demonstrated that participants primed with a status goal deficit state behaved more dishonestly than participants who were primed with a status goal munificent state. Similarly, study 5 found that contexts that value status attainment can promote dishonesty even in the absence of monetary incentives. Lastly, study 6 sought to highlight biased interpersonal behavior by demonstrating that when working on a joint task with a virtual partner, status goal orientations were associated with attributing more credit to the self at the expense of a team member on successful performance outcomes. Threat was found to moderate this effect.

3. Theoretical & Practical Contributions

The current research contributes to research on ethical dilemmas by extending the boundaries of what constitutes as self-interest. Prior research has shown that when individuals can justify their self-interested behavior, which has often been operationalized as monetary incentives, they may act dishonesty (Gino & Ariely, 2012; Schweitzer & Hsee, 2002). I demonstrate that self-interest can come in many forms. In particular, I show that non-monetary outcomes of status can motivate dishonesty. In fact, my research not only demonstrates that people will cheat for status, but it also identifies which types of individuals are more susceptible to doing so and under what circumstances.

Additional research in ethics has found that when people cheat, they do so only partially in order to profit from their behavior but not enough to damage their self-concept as honest people (Ayal & Gino, 2011; Gino & Ariely, 2012). My research contributes to this literature by capturing and predicting some characteristics of individuals who are willing to cheat to the full extent possible and identifying the factors that differentiate the "major" cheater from the "minor" ones that have been previously documented.

My work also makes contributions to the status literature by offering new evidence of an orientation for status goals which utilizes self-presentation to create a preferred image by deceptively signaling competence. Because actual competence is difficult to discern, groups frequently misuse available cues and award individuals status based on factors unrelated to competence such as appearance, gender, race, and nonverbal behavior (Anderson & Willer, 2014; Berger et al., 1972; Ridgeway, Boyle, Kuipers, & Robinson, 1998; Thomas-Hunt & Phillips, 2004). In addition, studies have shown that individuals who are orientated towards status tend to achieve it (Anderson & Willer, 2014; Flynn et al., 2006; McClelland & Boyatzis, 1982; Winter, 1988). Thus, the examination of the behavioral reactions associated with status goal orientations in contexts with ethical consequences is an interesting research question for both practitioners and researchers. My results support the idea that individuals high on status goal orientations are more likely to utilize self-presentation to create a preferred image by deceptively signaling competence. On the other hand, when individuals both low and high on status goal orientations use deceptive signaling strategies, contextual factors that contribute to activating situational status goal orientations may be at work. In addition, to my knowledge, my studies are the first to consider how the differential desire for status and the deficit for status can contribute to unethical behavior.

An emerging literature has begun to identify negative outcomes of status contests on group performance (Bendersky & Hays, 2012). My studies extend this body of work by empirically showing how status goal orientations are associated with harming other group members through biased interpersonal attributions on joint tasks. In addition, I show how threat moderates the effects of status goal orientations on this relationship. Lastly, I find that not feeling threatened by a teammate moderates the relationship between status goal orientations and biased interpersonal attributions. While this relationship was not hypothesized, I suggest that that status goal orientated participants are generally focused on signaling their own competence and thus their expectations of low partner performance crystalize their belief that their partner is undeserving of higher attributions.

3.1. Limitations & Future Direction

While my results are consistent with my predictions, they must be qualified by some important limitations of my research. First, in my studies, I created situations in which participants were tempted to cheat. I used an unsolvable anagram task and a high effort search task which may have triggered frustration causing participants to resort to cheating. Future research could investigate whether solvable tasks and more intrinsically interesting tasks would cause less frustration by satisfying self-interest through more ethical means.

Second, my studies did not create a context for future interaction which may have functioned to limit the impact of unethical behavior. For instance, the presence of a formal or legitimate status hierarchy may have curbed some of the cheating. Third, I assume that competence functions as the basis of differentiation in a status hierarchy, but there may be situations in which this is not the case. For example, cultures with relational concerns may value criteria such as helping behavior and leadership skills more than competence when conferring

status. In such cases, status goal orientations may not have as big an effect on cheating on a performance task. Future studies can test for this possibility.

An aspect of my work that could be further developed in future research is the role of threat, which I introduce in my final study. I found that asking participants to recall someone who threatened them moderated the effect between status goal orientations and biased interpersonal attributions. A future hypothesis to test is whether inducing a feeling of threat has the same effect on dishonesty, minimization of expended effort and other performance indicators.

Finally, future research could examine the boundary conditions of the effects observed in my studies and investigate how organizational context variables can be aligned with status incentives. For example, research could manipulate greater transparency, monitoring systems, the strength of ethical norms and norms that tolerate failure and experimentation in order to assess whether these factors could curb the negative outcomes inherent in the pursuit of status. Further, future research can investigate how variations in the structure and the distribution of status rewards influence the behavior of actors within them. For example, basing status on formal, observable and objective criteria such as benchmarking data as well as subjecting evaluations of neutral third party judges may inhibit some of the more negative effects of status goal orientations.

3.2. Conclusion

In conclusion, I found a strong relationship between status goal orientations, dishonesty, minimization of expended effort and biased interpersonal attributions. Across six studies, I demonstrate that some individuals will be oriented towards attaining social rank by using self-presentation to create a preferred image of superior competence. I also found that this orientation

can be primed and that contexts that value status attainment can have the same effect on ensuing negative behaviors. The challenge to organizations is to be able to accurately and reliably gauge merit and prevent the subversion of the proper function of its hierarchy, which is to align the incentive for attaining high social rank with actual contributions to its goals.

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Appendix A – Status Goal Orientation Scale

It annoys me when other people make more money than I do.

I enjoy driving the most modern of luxury cars.

It would please me to have a position of wealth and social standing.

I enjoy having influence over other people's decision making.

The kind of work I like is one that pays the top salary.

If push comes to shove, I would rather direct my team's activities myself rather than have someone else organize them.

Table 1 - Multinomial Logistic Regression Analysis, Study 1

Number of Words Cheated		B	Std. Error	Wald	Sig.	Exp(B)
1	Intercept	-1.895	0.914	4.30	0.038	
	Status Goal	-0.040	0.132	0.09	0.760	0.961
	LogTime	0.242	0.158	2.34	0.126	1.273
2	Intercept	-3.927	1.826	4.62	0.032	
	Status Goal	0.334	0.268	1.55	0.213	1.396
	LogTime	-0.012	0.291	0.00	0.967	0.988
3	Intercept	-1.244	1.329	0.88	0.349	
	Status Goal	0.554	0.219	6.37	0.012	1.740
	LogTime	-0.755	0.201	14.07	0.000	0.470

Model $\chi 2 = 33.687$, $p < .001$

Pseudo $R^2 = 0.135$

Table 2 - Multinomial Logistic Regression Analysis, Study 2

Number of Words Cheated		B	Std. Error	Wald	Sig.	Exp(B)
1	Intercept	-2.378	1.091	4.75	0.029	
	Status Goal	0.127	0.146	0.75	0.385	1.136
	LogTime	0.098	0.195	0.25	0.614	1.103
2	Intercept	-3.596	2.168	2.75	0.097	
	Status Goal	0.219	0.290	0.57	0.451	1.245
	LogTime	-0.074	0.394	0.04	0.850	0.928
3	Intercept	-4.118	2.383	2.99	0.084	
	Status Goal	0.758	0.334	5.14	0.023	2.133
	LogTime	-0.642	0.427	2.26	0.133	0.526

Model $\chi 2 = 9.62$, $p = .142$

Pseudo $R^2 = 0.047$

Table 3 - Moderated Regression Analyses, Study 6

	Competence Scale					Influence Scale				
Measure	β	SE	t	p-value		Measure	β	SE	t	p-value	
Initial Performance	0.021	0.02	1.017	0.31		Initial Performance	0.042	0.021	1.935	0.054	
Status Goal	-0.004	0.192	-0.021	0.984		Status Goal	-0.138	0.204	-0.675	0.500	
Threat	-3.140	1.278	-2.460	0.015	*	Threat	-3.510	1.359	-2.582	0.010	*
No Threat	-1.437	1.178	-1.220	0.223		No Threat	-3.172	1.253	-2.532	0.012	*
Status Goal X Threat	0.827	0.295	2.800	0.005	**	Status Goal X Threat	0.871	0.314	2.771	0.006	**
Status Goal X No Threat	0.317	0.280	1.131	0.259		Status Goal X No Threat	0.659	0.298	2.211	0.028	*
Adjusted R^2 = .07						Adjusted R^2 = .08					
F(4, 271) = 3.175**						F(6, 271) = 3.846**					

* p < .05. ** p < .01. ***p < .001.

Figure 1: Ordered Categorical Probabilitlies

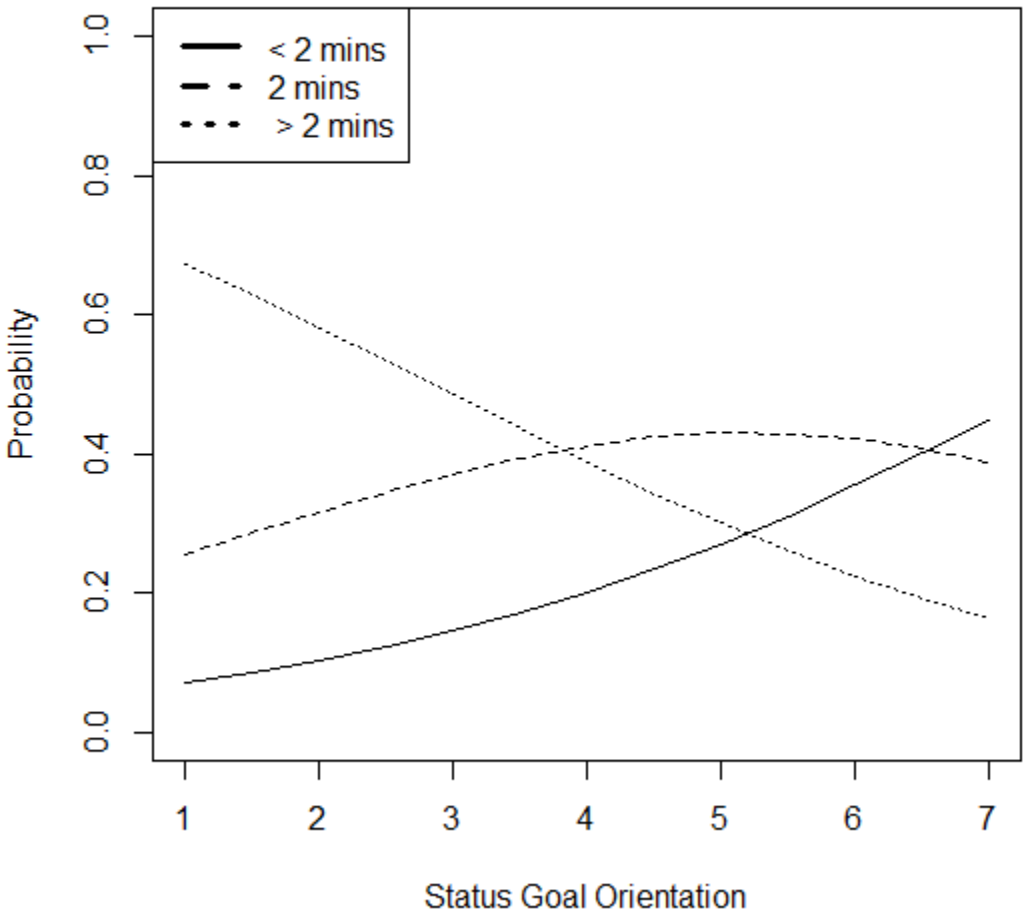

Figure 2. Interaction of Proself Attributed Competence, Study 6

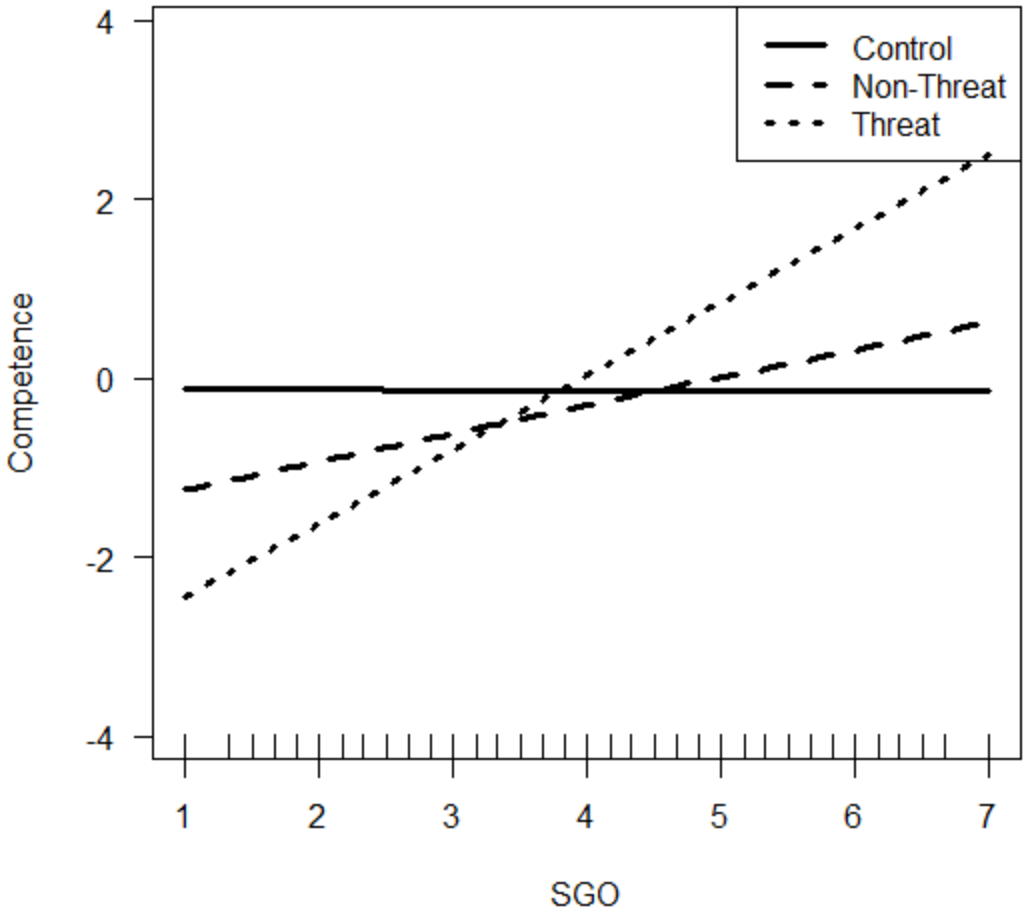

Figure 3. Interaction of Proself Attributed Influence, Study 6