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Abstract

Workplace negative affectivity (NA) has been well-examined in the literature, but no study has explored its influence on perceived morale and perceived team cooperation. One hundred and fifty-eight undergraduates from a small university in the Midwest were randomly assigned to one of two vignette conditions and then answered questions about morale, cooperation, and affectivity. The study hypothesized that the presence of high NA would negatively affect perceived morale and perceived team cooperation. The hypotheses were supported, indicating that NA has a significant effect on both perceived morale and perceived cooperation, such that higher NA is related to lower perceived morale and lower perceived team cooperation. Results also indicated that participant positive affectivity was not related to either perceived morale or perceived cooperation, but NA shared a negative relationship with perceived cooperation. The results of this study have several implications for companies, including that employee disposition may impact team environments. Future research should continue to explore how personality may affect workplace environments.
Chapter I

Review of the Literature

Moods and emotions have a powerful influence on a person’s experience in day-to-day life. Because of this influence, it may be argued that people should adopt a positive outlook in order to fully enjoy their experiences. However, there are people who do not view life so optimistically, and those people are said to have negative affectivity (NA). NA is demonstrated by a person who tends to be distressed, worried, angry, and self-dissatisfied, and has a negative view of him/herself. The disposition is considered to be a “general negative condition” and those high in NA tend to react more strongly to situations, with or without stress involved (Watson & Clark, 1984). Even in circumstances in which an average person might focus on beneficial or positive aspects, a person with NA might tend to focus on the negatives of the situation. A prime example of a character with NA is Eeyore from the children’s Winnie the Pooh stories (Milne, 2009). Eeyore frequently walks around with a rain cloud over his head, has a quiet, low, and unenthused voice, and tends to concentrate on the negative side of whatever situation he and his friends may be in.

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of NA on perceived morale and cooperation in the workplace. There is an abundance of academic literature on the topic of NA and related constructs, including their impact on employees. Although literature exists that examines NA, morale, and cooperation separately, no study has explored how the three constructs are related. The impact of findings on this topic could
open new doors to how companies understand team dynamics and could have implications for areas such as selection and training. The present study considers the literature in different categories based on their varying foci: studies that explore the relationship between NA and work-related variables, articles that explore positive affectivity (PA), studies that examine both NA and PA, research on morale, and literature regarding team cooperation. In addition, although NA was not treated as a moderator in the present study, articles on the moderating effect of NA are reviewed because its role in other contexts is important to demonstrate its place in the overall research literature.

**Negative Affectivity**

**Negative affectivity and work-related variables.** Recent studies have found that NA can take both emotional and physical tolls on employees. Adil and Kamal’s (2013) study examined 232 customer service representatives in the cellular services and banking industries in Pakistan. The results of the authors’ study revealed that NA was positively related to levels of emotional exhaustion, such that the higher the level of NA that the participant had, the higher the level of emotional exhaustion he/she experienced.

Similarly, a study of 230 Brazilian oil company employees explored the relationship between NA and physiological strain (Zellars, Perrewe, Rossi, Tepper, & Ferris, 2008). Using electromyography, the researchers measured employees’ facial muscle tension and found that those with higher NA also had higher levels of muscle tension, resulting in the conclusion that higher NA predicted more physiological strain. However, the study also found that the relationship was possibly buffered by one’s level of political skill, or one’s level of social control that stimulates confidence and personal
security. Results indicated that the relationship between NA and strain was weaker for those with higher political skill.

Many studies have also considered the role of NA in memory and satisfaction. A meta-analysis conducted by Bowling, Hendricks, and Wagner (2008) examined the influence of NA in five job areas (the actual work, supervision, coworkers, pay, and promotion), and found that employees with higher NA tended to focus on, and later remember, negative rather than positive work events. Likewise, the results revealed that variance in the participants’ levels of overall satisfaction was related to affectivity, such that people with higher NA were less satisfied.

Other authors studied satisfaction and found similar results, stating that NA was negatively related to job satisfaction (Judge, Heller, & Klinger, 2008). Judge et al. (2008) had approximately 500 participants who were employees at a Midwestern university in the United States. Both a self-report survey and a survey completed by participants’ significant others were collected twice, once at the beginning of the study and once six months later. The results were similar to Bowling et al.’s (2008) findings in that NA was negatively related to job satisfaction.

The impact of NA on an employee’s perception of task accountability and satisfaction in the work itself has also been researched. Hochwarter, Perrewé, Hall, and Ferris (2005) conducted two studies on the relationship between accountability and job tension. The first study had a sample of 198 undergraduate students and the second study had a sample of 118 undergraduate students. The results showed that increased felt accountability predicted higher levels of job tension for employees when the employees had higher NA. This positive linear relationship has important implications for managers,
mainly that increases in accountability do not always lead to favorable results; ultimately, it depends on the type of affectivity that the employee embodies who gains accountability. If the employee was high in NA, increased accountability was likely to simultaneously increase his/her job tension.

A recent study examined 310 employees in 40 Taiwanese companies to explore the relationship between NA and behaviors that may be harmful in the workplace (Chen, Chen, & Liu, 2013). The authors found that NA was positively related to workplace deviant behaviors, defined as “voluntary behavior[s] that violat[e] significant organizational norms and … threaten the well-being of the organization, its members, or both” (Robinson & Bennett, 1995, p. 556). Workplace deviant behaviors are carried out by parties considered to be willing, because the employees exhibiting the behavior either do not have the motivation to conform to societal or organizational norms or may desire to purposefully disregard those norms (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Workplace deviant behaviors can range in severity from stealing office supplies to engaging in workplace violence, but no matter the severity, the acts should be evaded in order to maintain a healthy workplace. According to the study, employees high in NA were less inclined to avoid these harmful behaviors.

Furthermore, a study conducted by O’Brien, Terry, and Jimmieson (2008) tested the relationship between NA and post-task mood. The authors measured initial mood, post-task mood, coping strategies, task satisfaction, and performance in a sample of 256 first-year undergraduate psychology students in Australia. The results demonstrated that NA was positively related to the likelihood of post-task negative mood, and the relationship was actually strengthened in high-demand situations. Similar to Bowling et
al.’s (2008) and Judge et al.’s (2008) findings, O’Brien et al. found that higher NA predicted lower overall task satisfaction. The authors suggested that these results were due to the possibility that people high in NA used more emotion-focused rather than problem-focused coping strategies. Overall, employees with higher NA coped with challenging tasks in an unproductive way, which lead them to experience negative post-task moods. The literature has demonstrated that NA has had harmful outcomes for employees, both mentally and physically. However, its effects may not all be direct, and as such, it is important to also consider NA as a moderator variable.

**Negative affectivity as a moderator and a mediator.** Multiple studies have explored NA as a moderator or mediator of other relationships in the workplace, but four are particularly relevant to this review. In a study of 307 undergraduate night class students at a Southeastern United States university, Penney and Spector (2005) explored the effect of NA on other variables such as incivility, counterproductive work behaviors, and job stressors. The purpose of the research was to replicate previous findings and was successful as the results confirmed their hypothesis that NA moderated the relationship between job stressors and counterproductive work behaviors. The authors suggested that for people who had higher NA, their negative perception of the situation was what influenced their actions, specifically to engage in counterproductive work behaviors. Similarly, stronger relationships existed between job stressors and counterproductive work behaviors for employees who were high in NA compared to employees low in NA. Lastly, the authors posited that NA’s moderating effect on the job stressor and counterproductive work behavior relationship may have increased when self-report
measures were used rather than peer ratings, again because of their suggestion that people
with NA tend to perceive situations negatively.

Continuing, NA was shown to be a moderator of the relationship between
procedural justice evaluations and job satisfaction (Irving, Coleman, & Bobocel, 2005).
Two studies were conducted that produced the same finding; the first was a cross-
sectional design of 232 public sector employees in Canada and the second was a panel
study with 173 Canadian university students. Identifying NA as a moderator of the
relationship between evaluations of procedural justice and job satisfaction implied that
employee dispositions influenced the way in which organizational elements were
perceived by employees, such that people high in NA did not perceive procedures as fair.

NA and job satisfaction have also been studied in conjunction with job
performance. Smith (2006) examined these variables with 122 participants from a private
university in the Midwest. The author found significant results indicating that NA was a
moderator between job satisfaction and job performance. Specifically, when job
satisfaction was low, there were no job performance differences among those high and
low in NA, but when job satisfaction was high, people with higher NA had lower job
performance scores than those without higher NA.

Even though negative affect should be considered a separate construct from
negative affectivity, studies relating to the former may still provide insight into the latter.
Negative affectivity refers to the disposition, whereas negative affect refers to the state
emotion (Kafetsios & Zampetakis, 2008). To examine the influence of affect, two
researchers conducted a study with 523 people in the education system in Greece
(Kafetsios & Zampetakis, 2008). Through structural equation modeling, the authors
found that the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction was mediated by level of negative affect. Further results exhibited that emotional regulation significantly predicted an employee’s level of affect at work. Although these findings are relevant, the authors suggested that further research should identify specific workplace situations that provoke people to respond with negative or positive reactions.

**Examining positive affectivity to further understand negative affectivity.**

Instead of simply considering research on NA and exploring how to correct the resulting attitude in the workplace, it is important to review key findings on the construct considered close to the opposite of NA (Watson, Wiese, Vaidya, & Tellegen, 1999): positive affectivity (PA), also known as dispositional optimism (Assad, Donnellan, & Conger, 2007). It may be argued that PA is similar to positive orientation, which is demonstrated by a person who lives his/her life with a positive viewpoint, and is central to self-esteem, life satisfaction, and optimism (Alessandri et al., 2012).

There is a large amount of literature on PA, some of which is important to review in the context of affectivity’s influence on workplace dynamics. In a study of 204 sets of managers, service employees, and customers in Taiwan, high PA strongly related to positive customer experiences and outcomes (Chuang, Judge, & Liaw, 2012). This result has important implications for companies; customers working with an organization will likely be satisfied and return for future business if they are helped by an employee who is highly positive and helpful. The article stressed that managers should value emotion regulation and teach the strategy, particularly promoting positivity and regulating negativity, to their employees in order to improve customer relations.
Another important piece of PA literature in the context of the workplace is its relationship with job performance and organizational citizenship behaviors. Just as PA is considered to be negatively related to NA, organizational citizenship behaviors may be argued to be negatively related to counterproductive work behaviors (Alessandri et al., 2012). Alessandri et al. (2012) conducted three studies with 200, 372, and 311 insurance industry employees and found that a positive orientation, which as noted previously is arguably quite similar to PA, was related to higher job performance and more organizational citizenship behaviors exhibited. Although positive orientation is known to be central to self-esteem, life satisfaction, and optimism (Alessandri et al., 2012), its influence on job performance was actually greater than it was on any of those three constructs. Additionally, the self-report measure showed that positive orientation more strongly predicted in-role job performance than the two well-established predictors of core self-evaluations and the Big Five trait of Conscientiousness. Exploring the desirable influences of PA and its related constructs demonstrates how important it is to study, and possibly reduce, the effects of NA in the workplace.

Exploring negative affectivity and positive affectivity together. Ninety-four participants from a recruitment firm in London completed a questionnaire regarding personality, emotion helping, and network data (Toegel, Anand, & Kilduff, 2007). The study yielded several results, but mainly that an employee with high NA was less likely to exhibit emotional helping behaviors compared to an employee with high PA. This was especially true when the employee with high NA did not engage in self-monitoring behaviors, regardless of his/her level of managerial responsibility. On the other hand, employees high in PA were more likely to have managerial responsibility and engage in
self-monitoring. The article suggested that managers with high self-monitoring skills and PA should reach out to those employees with high NA to teach them how to manage their disposition at work rather than waiting for coworkers to complain about the negative employees. This may be difficult for a manager to do because of boundary restrictions, such as past and present interpersonal interactions, but could improve the employee’s affectivity and, in turn, improve the workplace. The authors noted that this action may be more feasible or important in industries that require more emotional labor, such as service industries.

Bouckenooghe, Raja, and Butt (2013) collected 321 responses from nursing staff employees in Pakistan who completed self-report questionnaires on affectivity, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions. Job performance information was gathered using a questionnaire distributed to employees’ supervisors. Similar to Alessandri et al.’s (2012) results, these authors found that NA was negatively related and PA was positively related to job performance. Additionally, they found that PA was negatively related to turnover intentions. The authors also concluded that employees high in NA had a difficult time reaching higher levels of performance on the job when they were dissatisfied with their job. It is clear that NA and PA have differing influences in the workplace, but a number of possible outcomes of PA and NA have yet to be assessed. In the following sections, two such are considered.

Morale

Although morale has not been studied in conjunction with NA, it has been examined in great detail on its own. Morale is characterized by “employees’ shared attitudes toward and identification with the elements of their job, working conditions,
fellow workers, supervisors, and general management,” and in the context of a group, morale is “akin to the affective climate of an organization” (Crossley, 2007, p. 488). Morale is distinguished from job satisfaction in that it is considered a group variable whereas job satisfaction is considered an individual variable (Locke, 1976). In order to understand the construct and whether it may be related to or affected by NA, reviewing key literature is critical.

The relationship between work team morale and team dynamics has essential managerial implications. A recent study examined these relationships by creating three-person teams from 279 undergraduate students tasked with developing a computer database system over a 5-week period (He, 2012). The researchers used surveys to measure morale among the teammates several times throughout the process and concluded with 227 sets of data for analysis. The most relevant result was that the higher the level of morale, the less likely a teammate was to “free-ride” in workplace teams. Free-riding is similar to social loafing or slacking, where a team member has the benefits of belonging to a team without doing his/her share of the work, and is usually disruptive to team synergy because of how the other team members perceive it to be unfair (He, 2012). However, it is unclear whether high morale made team members less likely to be free-riders, or whether a lack of free-riders helped to spur higher morale. Employees with high levels of NA may be more likely to be free-riders for several reasons including the tendency to have dissatisfaction with and disbelief in self (Watson & Clark, 1984), lower job satisfaction (Bowling et al., 2008; Judge et al., 2008), and higher levels of emotional exhaustion (Adil & Kamal, 2013). All of these characteristics may demotivate employees
with high NA to participate with the team, and as such, these employees may have a negative impact on work team morale.

There are several ways in which morale may be impaired. Workplace incivility (Cortina & Magley, 2009) can be considered any action that occurs at work between two or more people that is perceived as offensive, harmful, or a violation of social courtesies to one or more parties. Based on Cortina and Magley’s (2009) research, Sidle (2009) concluded that employees were likely to have decreased morale if they had managers who acted with incivility. Likewise, in another study, those who were high performers but acted with incivility at work tended to decrease morale (Williams, Campbell, & Denton, 2013). These findings are intuitive; if a coworker, especially a manager, offends an employee, that person who was just violated may feel less positive towards the company environment and/or teamwork situation in which the offense occurred.

As mentioned previously, Penney and Spector (2005) found that NA moderated the relationship between various job stressors (one of which was incivility) and counterproductive work behaviors, such that the relationships were more strong and positive for employees with high NA compared to those with low NA. NA was found to be related to workplace incivility (Penney & Spector, 2005), and incivility was found to be related to low morale (Cortina & Magley, 2009; Sidle, 2009), so this suggests that high NA may in turn be related to low morale. These findings have great implications for interpersonal management at work, including job productivity.

Because job productivity is central to a functioning and successful organization, it is appropriate to review its relationship with morale. Several Australian workplaces were studied by Weakliem and Frenkel (2006) in order to understand the relationship between...
productivity and morale. The analyses produced multiple results, the main finding being that morale effects job productivity in a positive and approximately linear manner. The authors ran a logistic regression for two models examining observed and estimated morale, and found significant beta weights: for observed morale, $b = .132$, $p < .01$, and for estimated morale, $b = .271$, $p < .01$. This relationship was even larger when managers emphasized product quality and placed value on corporate ethics. As with other results, it is not particularly surprising that the higher the levels of morale, the higher the levels of productivity, especially when managers promoted the organization’s social responsibilities among the employees. In addition, the study found that morale was a moderator of the productivity – work effort relationship, such that the higher the level of morale, the stronger the relationship was. The authors’ study reinforced the idea that an emotionally-driven construct such as morale can affect a company’s bottom line.

On a more complex level, other relationships between NA and morale exist and give reason to believe that the two variables are related. NA was negatively correlated with job satisfaction (Judge, Heller, & Klinger, 2008), and because job satisfaction shared a positive relationship with morale (Rauf, Saeed Akhtar, Iqbal, & Ahmad Malik, 2013), it is reasonable to expect that NA and morale may also have a negative relationship.

Likewise, as previously discussed, Chen et al. (2013) studied NA and workplace deviant behaviors and found that employees high in NA tended to exhibit more of these behaviors. Incivility may be argued to be a form of but different than workplace deviant behaviors (Hershcovis, 2011), and as also mentioned earlier, incivility was found to be related to low morale (Sidle, 2009; Williams et al., 2013). As such, it is reasonable to suggest that NA may also be related to morale. Furthermore, incivility has been
considered to be a violation of company ethics and norms, including cooperation (e.g., Pearson, Andersson, & Wegner, 2001), which will be reviewed shortly.

Many aspects of an organization are affected during times of organizational change, and morale is not an exception. A longitudinal study spanning 1991 to 2002 observed 516 sets of matched employees and employers in managerial, professional, and technical (MPT) positions (Yang, 2009). The corporate morale of white collar MPT employees changed very little during times of organizational restructuring, but more interestingly, those in managerial positions reported higher levels of resentment toward teamwork. In comparison, the morale and perception of teamwork did not change for professional and technical employees during organizational restructuring. The study demonstrated that morale and team cooperation were related; therefore, research pertaining to the latter will now be reviewed.

**Team Cooperation**

Cooperation is vital to a team’s success and has been linked to workplace morale (Yang, 2009), but like morale, has never been examined alongside NA. In this section, key findings related to cooperation will be reviewed, and an argument will be presented as to why NA might be expected to impact cooperation. A cooperative team is an example of a cooperative system, described as a system that “embod[ies] equality norms, emphasize[s] group accomplishments… and minimiz[es] [performance] distinctions among group members… because these distinctions may impede teamwork, information sharing, and helping” (Beersma et al., 2003, p. 572). Cooperation allows for the goal to be accomplished more quickly, positively, and with less petty conflict, and is related to multiple potentially-relevant constructs.
Ukstina (2012) noted that two important types of cooperation-related skills for teammates to possess are social and communication skills. A person is classified as having social skills if he/she has the ability to identify the feelings and issues of his/her teammates as well as the ability to understand his/her impact on his/her teammates. Likewise, a person is classified as having communication skills if he/she has the ability to develop goals, purposes, and approaches, demonstrates leadership when appropriate, and starts conversation. Tjosvold and Tsao (1989) created and tested a model that revealed additional factors that characterized cooperative teammates. These elements included an orientation to people, a shared vision, an emphasis on productivity, procedures to exchange, and cooperative interaction. Managers can use this specific information to not only create successful and effective teams, but also to train employees on these skills in order to cultivate more cooperative individuals.

A recent study found that cooperation, specifically whether or not an employee on a team shared his/her knowledge, affected team performance (Wu & Chen, 2014). The study surveyed 178 professors from different universities in Taiwan in order to understand this effect. When teammates shared their knowledge, there was a positive influence on the entire team’s performance. This is likely due to the actual knowledge aiding the team, but it is also possible that doing so promoted camaraderie. On the other hand, when camaraderie was lower and team conflict arose, levels of cooperation were more likely to be lower, and this created a negative effect on team performance (Wu & Chen, 2014). It is important for employees and managers to understand the consequences, both positive and negative, of their actions on team dynamics and productivity.
Other complex associations exist that give reason to suspect a relationship between NA and cooperation. Past research revealed that a similar concept, negative affect, had a negative relationship with emotional intelligence (Kafetsios & Zampetakis, 2008), and higher levels of emotional intelligence positively related to a healthy organizational climate (Momeni, 2009), which may be argued to include cooperation. Because of these relationships, it may be argued that NA should also be negatively related to team cooperation.

Additional research findings have linked affectivity and/or affect, to cooperation. It has been suggested that people high in NA have more unpleasant experiences with others because those high in NA tend to focus on the inadequacies of themselves and those around them (Brief, Butcher, & Roberson, 1995). On the contrary, employees with high PA tended to have higher quality decision-making and interpersonal interactions/performance (Staw & Barsade, 1993). Isen and Baron (1991) found that being in a positive mood promoted the occurrences of helping behaviors and cooperation while reducing the incidences of aggression, and George (1991) found that employees who reported a positive mood over the past week had higher supervisor ratings of altruism and customer service.

Furthermore, a leader’s display of a positive mood was positively related to team members’ customer service behaviors (George & Bettenhausen, 1990). As for group creativity, research has demonstrated that a person in a positive mood tended to be more creative in general but also in problem solving (Isen, Daubman, & Nowicki, 1987; Estrada, Isen, & Young, 1997). Lastly, it has been suggested that a person in a positive mood is more drawn to others, and the more attractive a person is, the more the person in
the positive mood will help him/her (Daniels & Berkowitz, 1963, as cited in George & Brief, 1992). As demonstrated, research has shown that people in a positive mood tend to be more cooperative; therefore, it stands to reason that someone who is high in negative affectivity may be likely to be less cooperative and that the presence of NA may affect even the perceptions of how cooperative a team is, or is likely to be.

The Present Study

The preceding review demonstrates that there has been much research on NA, morale, and team cooperation as independent constructs. After an in-depth search of the literature, however, it was found that NA’s relationship with morale and cooperation has not yet been directly explored. Past research on NA has focused primarily on how the “sour” outlook affects the person with the negative disposition; however, little has considered how the attitude influences others nearby, including coworkers. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to examine the relationship between NA and perceived morale and perceived cooperation. Although there is no prior research that specifically considers NA’s influence on perceived morale and team cooperation, the previous findings in the literature influenced the development of this study’s hypotheses.
Chapter II

Rationale and Hypotheses

As demonstrated throughout the literature, NA is linked to significant negative outcomes for those who exhibit the disposition, especially in the workplace. Research has shown that those with higher NA had lower job satisfaction (Judge et al., 2008), focused more on negative events (Bowling et al., 2008), were likely to feel a post-task negative mood (O’Brien et al., 2008), and experienced a more intense relationship between felt accountability and job tension (Hochwarter et al., 2005). Research also demonstrated that experiencing higher levels of NA also affected a person’s mind and body by increasing emotional exhaustion (Adil & Kamal, 2013) and physiological strain (Zellars et al., 2008). People with higher NA tended to focus on the inadequacies of themselves and those around them (Brief et al., 1995).

The research literature has exposed the contrasting effects of a related construct, positive affectivity (PA). In a general sense, NA has been found to be negatively related and PA positively related to job performance (Bouckenooghe et al., 2013). In business exchange relationships, higher PA was found to be related to positive customer outcomes (Chuang et al., 2012). Employees with higher PA tended to have higher job performance and more incidences of organizational citizenship behaviors (Alessandri et al., 2012). These employees were also likely to exhibit better decision-making and experience more positive interpersonal interactions (Staw & Barsade, 1993). Furthermore, people with
higher NA were less likely to exhibit emotional helping behaviors compared to those with higher PA (Toegel et al., 2007).

Morale was one additional construct appraised in the previous review that has implications in workplace settings and that may be linked to NA. Research revealed that morale had a positive relationship with job satisfaction (Rauf et al., 2013) and that increasing morale decreased “free riding” in workplace teams (He, 2012), but the presence of incivility in the workplace was suggested to decrease morale (Sidle, 2009). Likewise, employees who were high performers but acted uncivilly tended to decrease morale (Williams et al., 2013). Morale also acted as a moderator in the relationship between productivity and work effort (Weakliem & Frenkel, 2006).

Cooperation was also discussed in the earlier review as an outcome potentially affected by NA. Researchers have noted that the most common characteristics of members in successfully cooperative teams are social and communication skills (Ukstina, 2012). Other important qualities of teammates that further support cooperation included an orientation to people, shared vision, emphasis on productivity, and procedures to exchange (Tjosvold & Tsao, 1989). Furthermore, research showed that sharing knowledge amongst a whole team created a positive effect on the team’s performance, whereas team conflict created a negative effect (Wu & Chen, 2014). Lastly, research demonstrated that when a person was in a positive mood, he/she was more likely to be cooperative and exhibit helping behaviors (Isen & Baron, 1991).

It is clear that NA, morale, and cooperation are all related to workplace functioning, and there is an abundant amount of research (e.g. Judge et al., 2008; Rauf et al., 2013; Wu & Chen, 2014) that has explored these constructs. However, there is no
study that has examined the relationship among all three of the constructs, specifically how NA may predict morale and team cooperation in the workplace, or how the presence of NA may affect perceptions of morale and cooperation among a team. The goal of the present study was to fill those gaps. In this study, the following were hypothesized:

Hypothesis 1: NA will have a significant effect on perceived morale such that participants who read a vignette depicting an individual who demonstrates traits consistent with high NA will report perceptions of significantly lower levels of morale within that situational context than participants who read a vignette in which NA-consistent traits are not demonstrated.

Hypothesis 2: NA will have a significant effect on perceived cooperation such that participants who read a vignette depicting an individual who demonstrates traits consistent with high NA will report perceptions of significantly lower levels of cooperation within that situational context than participants who read a vignette in which NA-consistent traits are not demonstrated.
Chapter III

Method

Participants

The participants in this study were recruited from the Undergraduate Participant Pool of a small, private, midwestern university via bulletin board postings (see Appendix A), with information about the study and how to participate. Other than being a part of the Participant Pool and the ability to communicate in the English language, there were no specific criteria for people to meet in order to participate in the study. Study materials were posted on www.Qualtrics.com for participants to complete in exchange for Participant Pool credit until the desired number of participants was reached. Data were only utilized for participants who were at least 18 years old, but all students who participated received research credit.

Data were collected from 194 people. Thirty-six (18.6%) participants were not included in the analyses because they failed the manipulation check, and one additional participant was deleted because he/she was under 18 years old. The total sample size used to run the analyses was 158 participants: 91 read Vignette A and 67 read Vignette B. See Table 1 for participant demographics.

Stimulus Materials (Vignettes)

Participants were randomly assigned to one of two vignettes, Vignette A (vignette with a character with high NA) or Vignette B (vignette without a character with high NA), to read at the beginning of the study and then base their responses to the survey questions
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<td><strong>Participant Demographics</strong></td>
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*Note: For the four participants who chose “Other” for Race/Ethnicity, their corresponding text responses were “Multiracial (White and Asian),” “Mixed,” “Eastern European,” and “Arabic.”*
off of what they read. Each vignette was 202 words in length and both were very similar in content, structure, length, and reading level; the major difference was that a character, Taylor, exhibited elements of NA (such as distress, anger, and negativity) in one vignette but not in the other. Creating the vignettes to be parallel in all respects except for Taylor’s demeanor helped eliminate confounding influences on participants’ survey responses other than from Taylor’s character. See Appendices B and C for the vignettes.

**Measures**

**Morale.** There are very few scales that measure workplace morale, especially morale within a team environment. For this reason, the author chose to ask one single-item question and another scale with five questions, after a statement defining morale, to measure morale rather than using a published scale. Collectively, the five questions comprised what was termed the “Morale Scale.” The first question was, “Based on what you just read, overall, how much morale do you think you would be experiencing right now if you were part of this team?” The second set of questions was, “Based on what you just read, if you were part of this team, how high do you think the team’s morale would be in terms of…” and listed five items, such as “attitudes about working conditions,” with each requesting a separate response. The five components were based on Crossley’s (2007) conceptualization of morale. A 5-point scale that ranged from *Very Low* to *Very High* was provided for each component for participants to respond. The one-item question also used a 5-point scale that ranged from *Very Low* to *Very High*. The scores from the five-component scale based off of the conceptualization of morale were totaled and could range from 5 to 25. The present author chose to ask the single-item question in order to get an overall snapshot of morale, and the 5-item scale in order to receive more
detailed information about participants’ morale in different areas. Coefficient alpha for the 5-item Morale Scale was $\alpha = .84$. See Appendix D for the Morale Scale.

**Cooperation.** Scales exist that measure work team cooperation, but none of those identified for the purposes of this study considered the perceptual or hypothetical nature of cooperation in a manner consistent with the study hypotheses. As such, the present study utilized one question to measure cooperation. The question was, “Based on what you just read, to what extent do the members of the project team seem to be willing to cooperate?” The response options were on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*Very Unwilling*) to 5 (*Very Willing*).

**PANAS.** Participants responded to the 20-item Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson et al., 1988) in order for the researcher to explore potential covariates. The PANAS lists 20 feelings and instructs the participant to rate, on a scale from 1 (*Very Slightly or Not At All*) to 5 (*Extremely*), how he/she “in general, that is, on the average” experiences the feeling in question (Watson & Clark, 1999). Some of the items included, “Interested,” “Distressed,” and “Determined.”

The positive affect score was calculated by summing the scores for each item reflecting positive affect (e.g., “Excited”), and scores could range from 10 to 50. Higher scores represented higher levels of positive affect. The negative affect score was calculated by summing the scores for each item reflecting negative affect (e.g., “Hostile”), and the scores could range from 10 to 50. Higher scores represented higher levels of negative affect.

Research on the PANAS has described its appropriate psychometric properties (Watson & Clark, 1999), which were also evident in the present study as the PANAS
demonstrated high internal consistency reliability. The Cronbach’s alpha for the PA subscale was $\alpha = .87$ and the NA subscale $\alpha = .88$. See Appendix E for source information for the PANAS.

**Manipulation check.** A manipulation check was used in the study to confirm that participants recognized the presence or absence of negative affectivity in the vignette that they read. The check was one question at the end of the study that asked, “Did the scenario you read in this study include a team member who came across as negative?” followed by a Yes/No response choice. Of the 92 participants in the condition where negative affectivity was present, 91 (99%) correctly answered the manipulation check. Of the 102 participants in the condition where negative affectivity was absent, 67 (66%) correctly answered the manipulation check. Any individual who failed the manipulation check was excluded from further analyses.

**Demographics.** In addition to answering survey questions, participants were requested to provide demographic information. This included gender, age, year in college, race/ethnicity, previous employment, current employment, how many jobs held, and prior work team experience. Gender and age are important because they allowed the researcher to report such statistics with the results. Sample demographics are reported in Table 1. See Appendix F for the demographic questions.

**Procedure**

**Pilot test.** Nine first-year I-O psychology graduate students read one of the two vignettes and answered the manipulation check in order to determine if the manipulation was sufficiently strong. All nine pilot study participants answered the manipulation check
correctly. The data collected from the pilot study were not used in any way to contribute to the study’s analyses.

**IRB approval.** Before data collection began, the study received approval from the university’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB approval letter is included as Appendix G.

**Data collection.** Survey materials and questions were posted on www.Qualtrics.com. Participants were not told specifically what the central question to the research was; rather, they were told that the purpose of the study was to examine attitudes in the workplace.

After reading a section on informed consent (see Appendix H), the participants indicated their consent to partake in the study by pressing the “Next” button which then took them to the surveys. Participants first read a situational vignette and then responded to the different surveys on morale, team cooperation, affect, and demographic information. In the beginning of the survey, the Qualtrics software randomly assigned each participant to one of two conditions: reading a vignette that included a character with higher negative affectivity (Vignette A) or reading a vignette that did not include a character with high negative affectivity (Vignette B). As part of the demographic survey at the end of the study, the participant was required to answer the manipulation check question. If a participant did not correctly answer the manipulation question, his/her data were not used for testing the hypotheses. Data from any participant who failed the manipulation check was used for exploratory purposes only, and data from participants who were younger than 18 years old were deleted after credit was awarded. Finally, at the completion of the study, participants were provided with a link to a separate survey
where they could provide the information needed (e.g. name, course) for the researcher to assign participant pool credit.

There was a setting in Qualtrics that allowed for the highest level of participant protection and deleted any subject identifiers (e.g., IP address) for privacy. This setting was used to maintain participant anonymity. All data for this study were collected and stored on the Qualtrics website until the study was completed. Afterward, the data were stored on password-protected computers which only the researchers have access to, and will be saved for at least six years after any publication of results.
Chapter IV

Results

The hypotheses were tested using independent samples $t$-tests. The results of the hypothesis tests were significant, $t(156) = 11.17, p < .001, d = 1.80$ for morale and $t(156) = 9.38, p < .001, d = 1.52$ for cooperation, showing that there are differences between those who read the vignettes with and without evidence of NA on the outcomes of perceived morale and cooperation. Means and standard deviations for the morale and cooperation variables across conditions are reported in Table 2. These results support the hypotheses that NA has a significant effect on both perceived morale and perceived cooperation. The only demographic or personality variable related to either study dependent variable was NA, which correlated significantly with perceived cooperation ($r(156) = -.23, p = .003$). An ANCOVA utilizing participant dispositional NA as a covariate showed that the hypothesized effect of manipulated NA on perceived cooperation was still significant, $F(1, 155) = 87.34, p < .001$.

The aforementioned results of the $t$-tests were achieved using the composite morale scale. The results remained significant when the hypotheses were tested using the single-item morale score $t(156) = 10.02, p < .001, d = 1.61$. However, because the two measures were correlated ($r(156) = .74, p < .001$), the author chose to focus on the composite morale scale because it provided more detailed information and demonstrated appropriate psychometric properties, $\alpha = .84$. 
Table 2

*Means and Standard Deviations for Variables across Conditions*

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Morale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11.17*</td>
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<tr>
<td>NA Present</td>
<td>12.38</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>NA Absent</td>
<td>17.60</td>
<td>2.87</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceived Cooperation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9.38*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA Present</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>NA Absent</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>0.74</td>
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* p < .001
A correlation matrix (Table 3) was constructed to organize the study variables and one other significant relationship was identified: Participants’ Morale Scale scores and cooperation levels were correlated, \( r(156) = .60, p < .001 \).
### Table 3

*Descriptive Statistics, Intercorrelations, and Reliabilities of Continuous Study Variables*

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<tr>
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<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Negative Affectivity</td>
<td>21.34</td>
<td>7.09</td>
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<td>2. Positive Affectivity</td>
<td>34.39</td>
<td>6.78</td>
<td>-.16*</td>
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<td>3. Age (Years)</td>
<td>20.11</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>-.08</td>
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<td>4. Jobs Held</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.10</td>
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<td>5. Work Team at Employment</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.25**</td>
<td>.21**</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Work Team at School</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.23**</td>
<td>.05</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Morale Composite</td>
<td>14.59</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.09</td>
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<td>8. Cooperation</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>-.23**</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.60**</td>
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* = Correlation is significant at the $p < .05$ level.

** = Correlation is significant at the $p < .01$ level.

*Note: Numbers in parentheses are coefficient alpha reliabilities.*
Chapter V
Discussion

Results and Contributions

NA has been relatively well-examined in the workplace over the past 30 years, and it has gained even more attention over the past 15 years. Critical findings of past studies have included that the trait positively relates to emotional exhaustion (Adil & Kamal, 2013), post-task negative mood (O’Brien et al., 2008), and workplace deviant behaviors (Chen et al., 2013), and negatively relates to job satisfaction (Judge et al., 2008). The present study built upon those findings and posited that the presence of NA in a team member would lead to lower perceived team morale and team cooperation. The hypotheses were supported in that participants who read a vignette containing the character with NA perceived lower levels of morale and team cooperation compared to participants who read a vignette without the character with NA. No research had considered the relationships between NA and morale and team cooperation until the present study.

Another contribution from this study is the composite morale scale, which based on preliminary psychometric data appears to be a feasible instrument to assess perceived team morale. Utilizing Crossley’s (2007) conceptualization of morale as possessing the five components of a person’s attitude toward working conditions, coworkers, supervisors, management, and attitude and identification with the job, items were written and scale anchors chosen to assess this often-discussed but little-measured construct. To
assess dimensionality of the constructed scale, an exploratory factor analysis confirmed a unidimensional structure, and the scale demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = .84$).

**Implications**

The results of this study have implications for the workplace. First, managers can use this information to more effectively build project teams. For example, if a manager has to choose between two (or more) people to work on a team to complete an assignment, he/she may decide to not choose the person with high NA because the manager may not want the person with high NA to decrease the team’s morale and level of cooperation.

Companies should also consider these results in a training context. Past research has suggested that for employees with high NA, managers should discuss how to reduce their negative disposition at work (Toegel et al., 2007), and the present study’s results expand on that recommendation by highlighting the importance of addressing an employee with high NA. Not only is the person with high NA likely to be less satisfied with him/herself (Judge et al., 2008), he/she may also disrupt coworkers’ general morale. An employee on a work team may also be decreasing the team’s level of cooperation.

This type of conversation is likely to be most effective if the manager highlights the actual impact that an employee with high NA can have on a team and within a workplace; it is possible that a person with high NA does not think that his/her disposition affects others, and having the situation explained may provide motivation to better control potentially disruptive actions around others. Managers should have these discussions with their employees who show signs of high NA so the consequences of the negative disposition can be mitigated, particularly in terms of potential effects on morale.
and cooperation. Ways to start this type of conversation include asking the employee how the work team is getting along or how he/she is doing in general because of the concern that the employee is unhappy. Teams with a member with high NA could also be requested to complete peer assessments so the manager can conduct one-on-one meetings with each member, including the employee with high NA.

Similarly, companies should hold training sessions, whether company-wide or within a department with someone with high NA, on potential outcomes of high NA such as incivility. Workplace incivility is related to several negative outcomes such as reduced supervisor, coworker, and work satisfaction, the latter of which, in turn, increases turnover intentions and decreases the mental health of employees (Lim, Cortina, & Magley, 2008). Targets of incivility tend to experience negative mental reactions at work, including the fear of future interactions with the perpetrator, which can lead them to quit their jobs (Pearson et al., 2001, as cited in Lim et al., 2008). This training would impact employees high in NA because they tend to act in ways that are perceived as uncivil (Penney & Spector, 2005). Instead of training on personality and the advantages and disadvantages of working with an employee with high NA, which could ostracize and further the negative effects of the employee with the trait, companies could focus training on this harmful potential outcome of high NA. Employers can use this strategy to mitigate the influences of high NA by explaining to employees that incivility is unacceptable, without targeting the identities of those who are likely to commit the uncivil behaviors.

Because a high level of NA is related to lower perceived morale and team cooperation, it is possible that an employee with high NA can contribute to conflict
within the workplace, particularly on teams. If a manager finds that one of his/her teams has a problem, it would be wise to examine the personalities of the members to see if one has high levels of NA. If this is the case, then the manager may want to consider having a conversation about controlling the outward negativity, as previously discussed, which may result in higher morale and team cooperation. Future research should consider the most effective means of approaching a person who is causing harm to the morale and cooperation on a team.

The results of this study have additional implications in that, when selecting people for leadership positions in an organization, employees’ levels of NA might be considered. According to studies on the trait approach to leadership, two of the most important characteristics of a leader are self-confidence and determination (Northouse, 2010). Those with high NA tend to view themselves negatively and be angry and distressed, and because leaders deal with many people, being in a frequent state of anger would not be a beneficial quality. Moreover, because people with high NA tend to react more strongly to situations, with or without stress involved (Watson & Clark, 1984), a person with high NA would likely not be a successful leader due to leadership being inherently stressful. Overall, a team, whether that is a whole department/company or a group of people working on a project with a definitive end, will have difficulty achieving success if its leader has high NA. This is the case not only because of the poor placement of a person with high NA in a leadership position, but because he/she will also likely decrease their levels of morale and cooperation. A leader should be building these forces, not diminishing them.
In addition to leader selection, another implication of this study is that companies may consider this new information in other selection contexts. Because high NA leads to lower levels of perceived morale and team cooperation, which are two critical outcomes in a workplace, it may be wise to not hire employees with higher levels of NA. In a practical sense, this would be a simple addition to the hiring process as applicants could fill out the quick 20-item PANAS. If companies can avoid hiring people with high levels of NA, they could avoid interpersonal work conflict (including morale and cooperation concerns), which can lead to productivity issues later on and throughout that employee’s career. If not for all job positions, companies should consider conducting job analyses to identify positions that require a positive disposition, such as a dressed-up character at an amusement park; they could then add the PANAS as part of the selection process for those specific jobs to avoid hiring people with high NA for those positions.

Because it is has been shown that the presence of high NA can affect perceived morale and cooperation, the next question is whether the presence of high NA can affect actual team morale and cooperation. If high NA does influence actual team morale and cooperation, then does that map onto individual or team-level performance? If high NA affects actual morale and team cooperation, and if its effects on those variables negatively affect job performance at either the team or the organizational level, a company may be justified in screening out people who are high in NA based on performance, not just on how they may negatively affect their teams’ morale and levels of cooperation. Future research should examine the impact that high levels of NA have on actual morale and team cooperation.
Limitations and Future Research Directions

Although there are many strengths to this study, it also has limitations. First, the researcher did not use scales with demonstrated psychometric properties to measure morale or cooperation; however, there were no available scales that measure these constructs in a manner consistent with the research hypotheses. Nonetheless, psychometric properties of the composite morale scale were appropriate as coefficient alpha was $\alpha = .84$. The scale was established based on an accepted definition of morale (Crossley, 2007) and the items, as developed, were the best available method to test the hypotheses.

Other limitations of this study arise from the use of undergraduate participants. Using undergraduates limits the generalizability of the study. However, approximately 96% of the participants reported having had one or more jobs, and all but four reported having worked as part of a team in at least one school project, with 72% having been part of a project team at work. As such, it is reasonable to suggest that the present sample had non-trivial experience both with work in general, and with working as part of a team.

The most limiting aspect of using undergraduate participants was that several students may have taken the survey multiple (2-3) times each. Names were collected in a separate survey in order to assign credit, and 13 students’ names appeared multiple times. Because all subject identifiers (e.g., IP addresses) were deleted for privacy, there was no way the researcher could identify the multiple responses in the survey and therefore had to include them in the analyses. In addition, 15 more surveys were completed compared to the number of students who recorded their names for credit. To explore these issues, the present researcher conducted a detailed analysis in which she searched for response
patterns among the data, however, no cases were identical. It cannot be determined with a high degree of certainty that participants took the survey multiple times due to the nature of the Participant Pool process, but it is nonetheless a possibility.

In the demographic section of the survey, participants were asked to indicate whether or not they had been previously employed. The response options were “Yes, Full-Time,” “Yes, Part-Time,” and “No.” However, participants were unable to select more than one option, and it is possible that a participant had worked both full-time and part-time in the past. It is unlikely that this error had a significant impact on the study as a whole, but future research should reconsider the role of past employment and allow participants to select more than one type of previous job.

Furthermore, almost all of the participants in the condition with the vignette with a character with high NA correctly answered the manipulation question whereas 67% of the participants in the condition with the vignette without a character with high NA answered correctly. The present researcher did not anticipate this issue because of the success of the pilot study, but there are different reasons why this may have occurred. Possible explanations include that the pilot study students were acquaintances of the researcher and studying graduate-level material whereas all of the participants in the actual study were undergraduate students who were likely unfamiliar with the researcher. It may be argued that graduate students have a more advanced skill set, better understand the importance of research, and/or may have paid more attention while participating because they cared about providing quality data to the present researcher.

The difference in correct answers on the manipulation check questions also could have been due to participants’ perceptions of what a person “[coming] across as
negative” is. The language of the character in the vignette without high NA was crafted to be as neutral as possible so it would not be mistaken as PA, so the difference in correct responses between conditions also may have been caused by participants mistaking neutrality for negativity. It is also possible that people who were high in NA did not detect the manipulation due to possessing the trait themselves and were therefore less adept at categorizing the actions as negativity. To further explore this discrepancy, the present author ran a $t$-test to compare the participants in the condition without a character with high NA who did and did not answer the manipulation question correctly to determine if there was a difference in NA scores that might explain this pattern. However, the results were not significant. Future research should attempt to make manipulation conditions strong enough for participants to correctly answer manipulation questions.

Moreover, the present study focuses on the problem of high NA in the workplace, but it did not question if any level of NA, other than high, is an issue. It is possible that a lower level of the trait is advantageous in the workplace because it may allow those employees to focus more on work and less on other aspects of the office, such as being social, while also decreasing the detrimental effects that are related to high NA. On the other hand, having high NA may be beneficial in some occupations, such as an inspector in a nuclear power plant. In this case, higher NA may be related to higher job performance as an inspector with high NA would likely take the utmost scrutiny in examining each part. Future research should compare different levels of apparent NA (as opposed to simple presence versus absence) to explore whether the degree of negativity affects perceived morale and cooperation in the workplace.
There are various constructs that are potentially related to constructs discussed in this paper that were not measured in the present study but should be included in future research. For example, it could be argued that those with high NA are pessimistic. Pessimism has been found to be related to feelings of denial and interpersonal distancing (Schierer, Weintraub, & Carver, 1986). In contrast, research has suggested that positive people experienced happier, longer, and more satisfying relationships (Assad, Donnellan, & Conger, 2007); therefore, it is likely that pessimistic or negative people do not have such positive relational or group experiences. Lastly, those who are pessimistic were found to focus on stressful emotions and disengage from the goal that produced the anxiety (Penney & Spector, 2005), and this did not promote a positive work environment. It appears that NA and pessimism may be related, so future research may study the role of pessimism in morale and team cooperation, especially considering the prior findings on the constructs.

Research has also found a link between psychopathy and NA, such that those with psychopathy were more likely to experience negative affectivity (Hale, Goldstein, Abramowitz, Calamari, & Kosson, 2004). People with psychopathy typically lack social skills, including absence of empathy and a desire to manipulate others (Berkout, Gross, & Kellum, 2013), which are two actions absent in a cooperative team member. Because of these relationships, it would be interesting for future research to examine the relationship between psychopathy and morale and team cooperation.

Although negative affectivity and negative affect are similar constructs, the present study considered negative affectivity, making the results specific to that construct. Future research should explore the relationship between negative affect and morale and
team cooperation, to understand whether or not the relationships found in this study hold true with the state-based construct.

Furthermore, there are inherent limitations in using hypothetical vignettes in this study. The vignette design permitted the manipulation of the independent variable and required few criteria for participants to be eligible to partake in the study. However, this internal validity came at a cost of external validity. The experimental design permits the causal conclusion of the effects of NA on perceived morale and team cooperation, but the hypothetical nature of the vignettes may decrease the external validity of the study. Future research should consider this tradeoff and attempt to design studies in which generalizability is more apparent.

Finally, future research should continue to study these variables but with different versions of the vignettes. It could be argued that the character in the vignette acted negatively due to constructs other than high NA, such as general unpleasantness or narcissism (i.e., if he did not believe he needed a team to accomplish the goal). However, the vignettes were written based off of the definition of NA (Watson & Clark, 1984), specifically expressing distress, worry, anger, and self-dissatisfaction. In one of the vignettes, the character with high NA stated, “None of [the ideas suggested] will work. I don’t think this project is worthwhile, anyway. I don’t understand why we’re wasting our time,” and “I’m angry that we have to do this project… it’s stupid! It doesn’t make sense. I don’t think we can do it. We don’t have the skills. We won’t be able to finish it in time!” Future research should use variations of the vignettes to rule out other traits or mood effects that could possibly influence attributions of the character’s negative behavior.
Conclusion

Dispositional affectivity is a construct that affects how people navigate everyday life and is central to a person’s identity. Because of this, affectivity impacts peoples’ thoughts and actions, both at home and at work. Although positivity is desired by many people, there are those who tend to see life more negatively, and it is important to understand how NA can influence both a person’s personal and work lives, including its potential effects on perceived morale and team cooperation in the workplace. This study focused on those relationships and its major contribution to the literature is its finding that in a vignette-based study, the presence of high NA caused lower levels of perceived morale and team cooperation. There are many suggestions for future research laid out in this paper, and it would be beneficial for researchers to continue examining these relationships to further uncover the mechanisms behind workplace dynamics, especially in this world of high competition among businesses.
Chapter VI
Summary

Moods and emotions have a powerful influence on a person’s experience in day-to-day life. Because of this influence, it may be argued that people should adopt a positive outlook in order to fully enjoy their experiences. However, there are people who do not view life so optimistically, and those people are said to have negative affectivity (NA). NA is demonstrated by a person who tends to be distressed, worried, angry, and self-dissatisfied, and has a negative view of him/herself (Watson & Clark, 1984). Even in circumstances in which an average person might focus on beneficial or positive aspects, a person with NA might tend to focus on the negatives of the situation.

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of NA on perceived morale and cooperation in the workplace. There is an abundance of academic literature on the topic of NA and related constructs, including their impact on employees. Although literature exists that examines NA, morale, and cooperation separately, no study has explored how the three constructs are related. The impact of findings on this topic could open new doors to how companies understand disposition and team dynamics.

NA is linked to significant negative outcomes for those who exhibit the disposition, especially in the workplace. Research has shown that those with higher NA experienced lower job satisfaction (Judge et al., 2008), had lower job performance (Bouckenooghe et al., 2013), focused more on negative events (Bowling et al., 2008), were likely to feel a post-task negative mood (O’Brien et al., 2008), and experienced a
more intense relationship between felt accountability and job tension (Hochwarter et al., 2005). People with higher NA also tended to focus on the inadequacies of themselves and those around them (Brief et al., 1995).

Morale also has implications in workplace settings and that may be linked to NA. Research revealed that morale had a positive relationship with job satisfaction (Rauf et al., 2013) and that increasing morale decreased “free riding” in workplace teams (He, 2012), but the presence of incivility in the workplace was suggested to decrease morale (Sidle, 2009). Likewise, employees who were high performers but acted uncivilly tended to decrease morale (Williams et al., 2013). Morale also acted as a moderator in the relationship between productivity and work effort (Weakliem & Frenkel, 2006).

Lastly, in regard to cooperation, researchers have noted that the most common characteristics of members in successfully cooperative teams are social and communication skills (Ukstina, 2012). Other important qualities of teammates that further support cooperation included an orientation to people, shared vision, emphasis on productivity, and procedures to exchange (Tjosvold & Tsao, 1989). Furthermore, research showed that sharing knowledge amongst a whole team created a positive effect on the team’s performance, whereas team conflict created a negative effect (Wu & Chen, 2014). Lastly, research demonstrated that when a person was in a positive mood, he/she was more likely to be cooperative and exhibit helping behaviors (Isen & Baron, 1991).

It is clear that NA, morale, and cooperation are all related to workplace functioning, and there is an abundant amount of research (e.g. Judge et al., 2008; Rauf et al., 2013; Wu & Chen, 2014) that has explored these constructs. However, there is no study that has examined the relationship among all three of the constructs, specifically
how NA may predict morale and team cooperation in the workplace, or how the presence of NA may affect perceptions of morale and cooperation among a team. The goal of the present study was to fill those gaps. In this study, the following were hypothesized:

Hypothesis 1: NA will have a significant effect on perceived morale such that participants who read a vignette depicting an individual who demonstrates traits consistent with high NA will report perceptions of significantly lower levels of morale within that situational context than participants who read a vignette in which NA-consistent traits are not demonstrated.

Hypothesis 2: NA will have a significant effect on perceived cooperation such that participants who read a vignette depicting an individual who demonstrates traits consistent with high NA will report perceptions of significantly lower levels of cooperation within that situational context than participants who read a vignette in which NA-consistent traits are not demonstrated.

Method

Participants

The participants in this study were recruited from the Undergraduate Participant Pool of a small, private, midwestern university via bulletin board postings. Study materials were posted on www.Qualtrics.com for participants to complete in exchange for Participant Pool credit. Data were only utilized for participants who were at least 18 years old, but all students who participated received research credit.

Data were collected from 194 people. Thirty-six (18.6%) participants were not included in the analyses because they failed the manipulation check, and one additional
participant was deleted because he/she was under 18 years old. The total sample size used to run the analyses was 158 participants.

**Stimulus Materials (Vignettes)**

Participants were randomly assigned to one of two vignettes, Vignette A (vignette with a character with high NA) or Vignette B (vignette without a character with high NA), to read at the beginning of the study and then base their responses to the survey questions off of what they read. Each vignette was 202 words in length and both were very similar in content, structure, length, and reading level; the major difference was that a character, Taylor, exhibited elements of NA (such as distress, anger, and negativity) in one vignette but not in the other.

**Measures**

**Morale.** There are very few scales that measure workplace morale, especially morale within a team environment. For this reason, the author chose to ask one single-item question and another scale with five questions to measure morale rather than using a published scale. Collectively, the five questions comprised what was termed the “Morale Scale.” The first question was, “Based on what you just read, overall, how much morale do you think you would be experiencing right now if you were part of this team?” The second set of questions was, “Based on what you just read, if you were part of this team, how high do you think the team’s morale would be in terms of…” and listed five items, with each requesting a separate response. The five components were based on Crossley’s (2007) conceptualization of morale. Coefficient alpha for the 5-item Morale Scale was $\alpha = .84$. 
Cooperation. Scales exist that measure work team cooperation, but none of those identified for the purposes of this study considered the perceptual or hypothetical nature of cooperation in a manner consistent with the study hypotheses. As such, the present study utilized one question to measure cooperation: “Based on what you just read, to what extent do the members of the project team seem to be willing to cooperate?”

PANAS. Participants responded to the 20-item Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson et al., 1988) in order for the researcher to explore potential covariates. The PANAS lists 20 feelings and instructs the participant to rate how he/she “in general, that is, on the average” experiences the feeling in question (Watson & Clark, 1999). The Cronbach’s alpha for the PA subscale was \( \alpha = .87 \) and the NA subscale \( \alpha = .88 \).

Manipulation check. A manipulation check was used in the study to confirm that participants recognized the presence or absence of negative affectivity in the vignette that they read. The check was one question at the end of the study that asked, “Did the scenario you read in this study include a team member who came across as negative?” Of the 92 participants in the condition where negative affectivity was present, 91 (99%) correctly answered the manipulation check. Of the 102 participants in the condition where negative affectivity was absent, 67 (66%) correctly answered the manipulation check. Any individual who failed the manipulation check was excluded from further analyses.

Demographics. In addition to answering survey questions, participants were requested to provide demographic information. Sample demographics were reported in Table 1.
Procedure

**Pilot test.** Nine first-year I-O psychology graduate students read one of the two vignettes and answered the manipulation check in order to determine if the manipulation was sufficiently strong. All nine pilot study participants answered the manipulation check correctly. The data collected from the pilot study was not used in any way to contribute to the study’s analyses.

**IRB approval.** Before data collection began, the study received approval from the university’s Institutional Review Board (IRB).

**Data collection.** After reading a section on informed consent, participants indicated their consent to partake in the study by pressing the “Next” button. Participants then read one of the two vignettes that they were randomly assigned to and responded to the different surveys. Finally, at the completion of the study, participants were provided with a link to a separate survey where they could provide the information needed (e.g. name, course) for the researcher to assign participant pool credit.

There was a setting in Qualtrics that allowed for the highest level of participant protection and deleted any subject identifiers (e.g., IP address) for privacy. This setting was used to maintain participant anonymity. All data for this study were collected and stored on the Qualtrics website until the study was completed. Afterward, the data were stored on password-protected computers which only the researchers have access to, and will be saved for at least six years after any publication of results.

**Results**

The hypotheses were tested using independent samples *t*-tests in SPSS. The results of the hypothesis tests were significant, $t(156) = 11.17, p < .001, d = 1.80$ for
morale and \( t(156) = 9.38, p < .001, d = 1.52 \) for cooperation, showing that there are differences between those who read the vignettes with and without evidence of NA on the outcomes of perceived morale and cooperation. Means and standard deviations for the morale and cooperation variables across conditions are reported in Table 2. These results support the hypotheses that NA has a significant effect on both perceived morale and perceived cooperation. The only demographic or personality variable related to either study DV was NA, which correlated significantly with perceived cooperation \( (r(156) = -.23, p = .003) \). An ANCOVA utilizing participant dispositional NA as a covariate showed that the hypothesized effect of manipulated NA on perceived cooperation was still significant, \( F(1, 155) = 87.34, p < .001 \).

The aforementioned results of the \( t \)-tests were achieved using the composite morale scale. The results remained significant when the hypotheses were tested using the single-item morale score \( t(156) = 10.02, p < .001, d = 1.61 \).

A correlation matrix (Table 3) was constructed to organize the study variables and one other significant relationship was identified: Participants’ Morale Scale scores and cooperation levels were correlated, \( r(156) = .60, p < .001 \).

**Discussion**

**Results and Contributions**

The present study built upon past research findings and posited that the presence of NA in a team member would lead to lower perceived team morale and team cooperation; results supported the hypotheses. No research had considered the relationships between NA and morale and team cooperation until the present study.
Another contribution from this study is the composite morale scale, which based on preliminary psychometric data appears to be a feasible instrument to assess perceived team morale. Utilizing Crossley’s (2007) conceptualization of morale, items were written and scale anchors chosen to assess this often-discussed but little-measured construct. An exploratory factor analysis confirmed a unidimensional structure and the scale demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = .84$).

**Implications**

The results of this study have implications for the workplace. First, managers can use this information to more effectively build project teams. For example, if a manager has to choose between multiple people to work on a team to complete an assignment, he/she may decide to not choose the person with high NA because the manager may not want the person with high NA to decrease the team’s morale and level of cooperation.

Companies should also consider these results in a training context. Past research has suggested that for employees with high NA, managers should discuss how to reduce their negative disposition at work (Toegel et al., 2007), and the present study’s results expand on that recommendation by highlighting the importance of addressing an employee with high NA. Not only is the person with high NA likely to be less satisfied him/herself (Judge et al., 2008), he/she may also disrupt coworkers’ general morale. An employee on a work team may also be decreasing the team’s level of cooperation.

Similarly, companies should hold training sessions, whether company-wide or within a department with someone with high NA, on potential outcomes of high NA such as incivility. Workplace incivility is related to several negative outcomes such as reduced supervisor, coworker, and work satisfaction (Lim, Cortina, & Magley, 2008). This
training would impact employees high in NA because they tend to act in ways that are perceived as uncivil (Penney & Spector, 2005). Employers can use this strategy to mitigate the influences of high NA by explaining to employees that incivility is unacceptable, without targeting the identities of those who are likely to commit the uncivil behaviors.

The results of this study have additional implications in that, when selecting people for leadership positions in an organization, employees’ levels of NA might be considered. According to studies on the trait approach to leadership, two of the most important characteristics of a leader are self-confidence and determination (Northouse, 2010). Those with high NA tend to view themselves negatively and be angry and distressed, making it unlikely that they will embody self-confidence and determination. Moreover, because people with high NA tend to react more strongly to situations, with or without stress involved (Watson & Clark, 1984), a person with high NA would likely not be a successful leader due to leadership being inherently stressful.

Because it is has been shown that the presence of high NA can affect perceived morale and cooperation, the next question is whether the presence of high NA can affect actual team morale and cooperation. If high NA affects actual morale and team cooperation, and if its effects on those variables negatively affect job performance at either the team or the organizational level, a company may be justified in screening out people who are high in NA based on performance, not just on how they may negatively affect their teams’ morale and levels of cooperation. Future research should examine this possibility.
Limitations and Future Research Directions

Although there are many strengths to this study, it also has limitations, such as the use of undergraduate participants. This sample limits the generalizability of the study. However, approximately 96% of the participants reported having had one or more jobs, and all but four reported having worked as part of a team in at least one school project, with 72% having been part of a project team at work. As such, it is reasonable to suggest that the present sample had non-trivial experience both with work in general, and with working as part of a team.

Another issue with the sample was that several students may have taken the survey multiple (2-3) times each. Names were collected in a separate survey in order to assign credit, and 13 students’ names appeared multiple times. Because all subject identifiers were deleted for privacy, there was no way the researcher could identify the multiple responses in the survey and therefore had to include them in the analyses. To explore these issues, the present researcher conducted a detailed analysis in which she searched for response patterns among the data, however, no cases were identical. It cannot be determined with a high degree of certainty that participants took the survey multiple times due to the nature of the Participant Pool process, but it is nonetheless a possibility.

Furthermore, almost all of the participants in the condition with the vignette with a character with high NA correctly answered the manipulation question whereas 67% of the participants in the condition with the vignette without a character with high NA answered correctly. The difference in correct answers on the manipulation check questions could have been due to participants’ perceptions of what a person “[coming]
across as negative” is. Likewise, the language of the character in the vignette without high NA was crafted to be as neutral as possible, so the difference in correct responses between conditions may have been caused by participants mistaking neutrality for negativity. Future research should attempt to make conditions strong enough for participants to correctly answer manipulation questions.

Finally, future research should continue to study these variables but with different versions of the vignettes. It could be argued that the character in the vignette acted negatively due to constructs other than high NA. However, the vignettes were written based off of the definition of NA (Watson & Clark, 1984). Future research should use variations of the vignettes to rule out other traits or mood effects that could possibly influence attributions of the character’s negative behavior.

**Conclusion**

Affectivity impacts peoples’ thoughts and actions, both at home and at work. Although positivity is desired by many, there are those who tend to see life more negatively, and it is important to understand how NA can influence both a person’s personal and work lives, including its potential effects on perceived morale and team cooperation in the workplace. This study focused on those relationships and its major contribution to the literature is its finding that in a vignette-based study, the presence of high NA caused lower levels of perceived morale and team cooperation. It would be beneficial for researchers to continue examining these relationships to further uncover the mechanisms behind workplace dynamics, especially in this world of competitive business.
References


http://www.journals.elsevier.com/research-in-organizational-behavior/


Appendix A

Participant Pool Recruitment – Bulletin Board Posting

Sarah Sweitzer
Attitudes in the Workplace

Would you like to participate in a new research project on attitudes in the workplace for participant pool credit? If so, please consider taking my simple online study where you will read a short blurb and answer some questions about it. The whole survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete and can be done online at your convenience. If you are interested in participating in this study, just take one of the tear tags below and enter the URL on your computer. (Note that the tinyurl link will take you to the Qualtrics.com website automatically.)

http://tinyurl.com/qaf2qoj

Thank you for your participation! 😊
Appendix B

Vignette A: Vignette with a Character with Negative Affectivity

You are in a meeting with your new teammates to learn about a project you have been assigned to. The goal of the project is to improve the efficiency in the shipping department. You have been brainstorming individually for the past 20 minutes and now are reconvening with your team to share your ideas. There is no specified leader, so the conversation is free-flowing and all of the ideas shared so far are great. One of your teammates that you just met today, Taylor, is not contributing to the discussion and looks dismissive. You don’t want Taylor to feel left out, so you ask what Taylor’s idea is. The following conversation occurs:

*Taylor:* “I don’t know.”

*You:* “It’s okay to not have an idea. What do you think of the other suggestions that others have mentioned?”

*Taylor:* “None of them will work. I don’t think this project is worthwhile, anyway. I don’t understand why we’re wasting our time.”

*You:* “You seem upset. Is something wrong?”

*Taylor:* “I’m angry that we have to do this project… it’s stupid! It doesn’t make sense. I don’t think we can do it. We don’t have the skills. We won’t be able to finish it in time!”
Appendix C

Vignette B: Vignette without a Character with Negative Affectivity

You are in a meeting with your new teammates to learn about a project you have been assigned to. The goal of the project is to improve the efficiency in the shipping department. You have been brainstorming individually for the past 20 minutes and now are reconvening with your team to share your ideas. There is no specified leader, so the conversation is free-flowing and all of the ideas shared so far are great. One of your teammates that you just met today, Taylor, is not contributing to the discussion and you wonder why. You don’t want Taylor to feel left out, so you ask what Taylor’s idea is. The following conversation occurs:

Taylor: “I think that we should consider updating the shipping software on the computers. The programs are old and I think there are newer ones that could help expedite the shipping processes.”

You: “That’s a good idea. What do you think of the other suggestions that we have mentioned?”

Taylor: “I liked Hannah’s suggestion of having only one manager working at a time so there’s less confusion among the employees on the floor. Do you all think that it’s possible to implement more than one intervention at a time?”
Appendix D

The Morale Scale

Morale is characterized by “employees’ shared attitudes toward and identification with the elements of their job, working conditions, fellow workers, supervisors, and general management,” (Crossley, 2007, p. 488). It is similar to the climate of a group.

Please select your response for each question. Based on what you just read, overall, how much morale do you think you would be experiencing right now if you were part of this team?

Very low------Low-------Neither low nor high------High------Very high

Based on what you just read, if you were part of this team, how high do you think the team’s morale would be in terms of:

1. Attitudes about working conditions
   Very low------Low-------Neither low nor high------High------Very high

2. Attitudes about fellow workers
   Very low------Low-------Neither low nor high------High------Very high

3. Attitudes about supervisors
   Very low------Low-------Neither low nor high------High------Very high

4. Attitudes about general management
   Very low------Low-------Neither low nor high------High------Very high

5. Attitudes about how much employees identify with their jobs in general
   Very low------Low-------Neither low nor high------High------Very high
Appendix E

Source Information for the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS)

A copy of the PANAS was obtained from the “Manual for the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule - Expanded Form” at http://www2.psychology.uiowa.edu/faculty/clark/panas-x.pdf.
Appendix F

Demographic Questionnaire

Please answer the following demographic questions by choosing the response that best describes you.

1. What is your gender?
   a. Male          c. Transgendered
   b. Female        d. Prefer not to respond.

2. What is your race/ethnicity?
   a. Black         d. Asian
   b. Hispanic      e. Other: __________
   c. White         f. Prefer not to respond.

3. Please enter your age (in years): __________

4. What year in college are you?
   a. First-year    c. Junior
   b. Sophomore     d. Senior or fifth year

5. Have you been previously employed?
   a. Yes, full time
   b. Yes, part time
   c. No

6. Are you currently employed?
   a. Yes, full time
   b. Yes, part time
   c. No

7. How many jobs have you had, including any that you currently have?
   a. 0 jobs
   b. 1-2 jobs
   c. 3-4 jobs
   d. 5 or more jobs

8. How many times have you been on a work team that was created to complete a particular project where you were employed?
   a. 0 times
   b. 1-2 times
   c. 3-4 times
   d. 5 or more times
9. How many times have you been on a team that was created to complete a particular project for a class?
   a. 0 times
   b. 1-2 times
   c. 3-4 times
   d. 5 or more times

10. Did the scenario you read in this study include a team member who came across as negative?
    a. Yes
    b. No
Appendix G

IRB Approval Letter

November 13, 2014

Sarah Sweitzer
30344 Montfort Road #24
Laguna Beach, CA 92651

Re: Protocol #14-039, The Influence of Negative Affectivity on Perceived Moral and Team Cooperation

Dear Ms. Sweitzer:

The IRB has reviewed the materials regarding your study, referenced above, and has determined that it meets the criteria for the Exempt from Review category under Federal Regulation 45 CFR 46. Your protocol is approved as exempt research, and therefore requires no further oversight by the IRB.

If you wish to modify your study, including the addition of data collection sites, it will be necessary to obtain IRB approval prior to implementing the modification. If any adverse events occur, please notify the IRB immediately.

Please contact our office if you have any questions. We wish you success with your project!

Sincerely,

Kathleen J. Hart, Ph.D., ABPP
Vice Chair, Institutional Review Board
Xavier University

KJH/b
Appendix H

Informed Consent Form

My name is Sarah Sweitzer and you are being given the opportunity to volunteer to participate in a project conducted through Xavier University.

This purpose of this study is to examine workplace attitudes and will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Your participation is completely voluntary and anonymity and confidentiality will be secured for your protection. If you decide to participate in the project, please click the “Next” button to confirm your consent and move on to the survey after reading the rest of this page.

If you have any questions at any time during the study, you may contact myself, Sarah Sweitzer, at [author’s phone number] or [author’s email address] or my thesis chair, Dr. Morrie Mullins, at [chair’s phone number] or [chair’s email address]. Questions about your rights as a research subject should be directed to Xavier University’s Institutional Review Board at (513) 745-2870.

The purpose of this study is to examine attitudes in the workplace. To participate, you must be a part of the Xavier University Participant Pool. This study involves reading a vignette about a workplace situation and responding to three attitude questionnaires. You will also be asked to provide demographic information about yourself and follow a link to a separate survey to provide your personal information in order to receive Participant Pool credit. At no point will your name be associated with your responses, and no identifying information will be collected by the websites where the surveys are hosted. Participation in this study will take approximately 15 minutes.

There are no known risks to participating in this study and no reason to expect the study to cause you any form of discomfort. The advantage to participating is that you will receive 15 minutes of participant pool credit.

Your name will only be requested when the study is over after you are linked to a completely separate survey where you need to provide your name and instructor’s name to receive Participant Pool credit. There is no way to link the personal information you provide for credit with your responses in the study.

Refusal to participate in this study will have NO EFFECT ON ANY FUTURE SERVICES you may be entitled to from the University. You are FREE TO WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY AT ANY TIME WITHOUT PENALTY.

By clicking the “Next” button, you agree to the following: I have been given information about this research study and its risks and benefits and have had the opportunity to ask questions and to have my questions answered to my satisfaction. I freely give my consent to participate in this research project.

[NEXT]