

# S Y M P O S I U M

## NARCISSISM: AN INTEGRATIVE SYNTHESIS AND DOMINANCE COMPLEMENTARITY MODEL

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**Narcissism has become an increasingly popular research topic in recent years. We describe why it is beneficial for organizational researchers to study narcissism due to its two strongest organizational correlates: counterproductive work behavior and leadership. We explore why narcissists perform counterproductive work behavior and offer advice on what organizations can do to prevent narcissists' counterproductivity. Subsequently, we discuss narcissism's relationship with leadership effectiveness, and propose a Narcissistic Leaders and Dominance Complementarity Model, which examines the dynamic interaction of narcissistic leaders' characteristics with those of their followers to predict leadership effectiveness. Finally, we suggest four areas of management that may benefit from incorporating narcissism as a determinant of their respective organizational outcomes of interest: international management, social issues in management/corporate social responsibility, entrepreneurship, and negotiation.**

"He is a dreadful manager. . . . I have always liked Steve [Jobs], but I have found it impossible to work for him. . . . He acts without thinking and with bad judgment. . . . He does not give credit where due. . . . Very often, when told a new idea, he will immediately attack it and say it is worthless or even stupid, and tell you that it was a waste of time to work on it. This alone is bad management, but if the idea is a good one he will soon be telling people about it as though it was his own." (Jef Raskin, quoted in Isaacson, 2011, p. 112)

Steve Jobs's death triggered an outpouring of support and grief for the loss of a visionary who instigated a cultural revolution (Markoff, 2011). Part of his success as cofounder of Apple has been attributed to his incredible charisma, which often enabled him to inspire tremendous loyalty and overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Yet, for all his positive traits, Jobs was no saint and has been criticized for his arrogance and abrasive interpersonal style, especially as a manager. In a biography sanctioned by Jobs himself, he is described as being harsh and sometimes even cruel to his

employees (Isaacson, 2011). Known for being an exacting perfectionist, he frequently insulted and sometimes publicly humiliated followers if they failed to meet his expectations (Isaacson, 2011). In addition to abusing his subordinates, he was also accused of various other shortcomings that are consistent with the definition of counterproductive work behavior (CWB), defined as "volitional acts that harm or are intended to harm organizations or people in organizations" (Spector & Fox, 2005, p. 151). Examples of Jobs' CWB include taking credit for others' work, making risky business decisions, and tending to have a distorted version of reality that allowed him to lie convincingly and without guilt because some part of him believed what he was saying to be true (Isaacson, 2011).

Though Jobs will be widely remembered for his technological inventions, his claim to immortality—and the reason his biography was Amazon's best-selling book in 2011—may well stem from the world's fascination with the complexities that defined his character. In many ways, he is a perfect example of the benefits and costs that narcissists

bring to the workplace. While he displayed a range of the stereotypical egocentric personality traits associated with narcissism, such as being self-centered, arrogant, and entitled, he also had an almost hypnotizing level of charisma that enabled him to get others to buy into his grand visions.

In this paper, we describe why narcissism is worth studying and examine its impact on the workplace, with an emphasis on how it affects CWB and leadership. Our goal is to provide an integrative synthesis of the current organizational narcissism research and direct scholars' attention to areas in need of further research. We chose to focus on CWB and leadership because narcissism clearly has negative interpersonal and ethical implications that are particularly relevant to predicting these two workplace criteria, a proposition we will expand throughout the paper.

Researchers have acknowledged that personality traits should be aligned with specific workplace criteria for which they have strong theoretical ties to enhance the accuracy and validity of estimated relationships (Hogan & Holland, 2003). For example, extraversion (a trait that "consists of sociability, dominance, ambition, positive emotionality, and excitement-seeking"; Barrick, Mount, & Judge, 2001, p. 11) is more strongly related to job performance for sales jobs and managerial jobs (i.e., jobs with an interpersonal interaction element) (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Mount, Barrick, & Stewart, 1998). In addition, extraversion has a stronger relationship with certain kinds of organizational outcomes such as teamwork effectiveness (Morgeson, Reider, & Campion, 2005). Similarly, there are several reasons why it is useful to concentrate on narcissism's effect on two specific workplace criteria: CWB and leadership. First, narcissism explains incremental variance in both of these criteria beyond that explained by the dominant personality taxonomy, the Five Factor Model<sup>1</sup> or "Big Five" (Goldberg, 1993; Judge, LePine, & Rich, 2006). Second, the unique relationship between narcissism and CWB/leadership is clearly evident when contrasted with other workplace outcomes. For example, as illustrated in Table 1, narcissism has been associated with task performance, job satisfaction, and organizational

citizenship behavior (OCB), yet unlike CWB and leadership, previous research has found that they are weakly or unrelated to narcissism.<sup>2</sup>

In this work, we contribute to the organizational narcissism literature in two ways. First, we summarize and suggest potential reasons why narcissism is positively related to CWB and use these reasons to suggest steps organizations can take to reduce narcissists' CWB. Second, we propose the Narcissistic Leaders and Dominance Complementarity Model to better understand what kind of follower will work most effectively with narcissistic leaders. Finally, we conclude with a focus on potential directions for future research in organizational contexts, discussing how narcissism research can be further integrated with outside disciplines, including international management, ethics and social corporate responsibility, entrepreneurship, and negotiation.

### WHAT IS NARCISSISM?

Narcissism research stretches back to the foundations of psychological inquiry (Ellis, 1898; Freud, 1914/1991). Havelock Ellis first used the term *narcissism* in 1898. The label referred to the ancient myth of Narcissus, who was so vain that he fell deeply in love with his own reflection in a pool of water and slowly wasted away rather than cease gazing at himself. Later, Freud incorporated the name into his psychoanalytic theory to identify individuals who exhibited excessive self-admiration because of an unhealthy relationship between their ego and libido (Freud, 1914/1991).

The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* describes narcissism as a grandiose preoccupation with one's own self-importance; that is, the belief that one is special and more important than others (5th ed.; DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013). Additional diagnostic criteria for narcissistic personality disorder include "fantasies of unlimited success," "hypersensitivity to criticism," "entitlement," "exploitativeness," and "a lack of empathy" (APA, 2013 p. 645). Narcissism, similar to other personality traits, exists along a continuum from high to low levels. Organizational research focuses on narcissism as a personality trait and not a

<sup>1</sup> The Five Factor Model is a widely accepted model of personality, which proposes that five broad dimensions can be used to describe human personality. The five dimensions are extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and intellect/openness to experience.

<sup>2</sup> Table 1 also lists variables found to moderate the relationship between the three work outcomes and narcissism, as well as additional moderators we believe are worthy of investigation.

**TABLE 1**  
**Summary of Studies Linking Narcissism With Non-Central Work Outcomes and Suggested Moderators**

	Source	Sample size	Linkage to narcissism
<b>Task performance</b> (O'Boyle et al., 2012)	Meta-analysis	$k = 18; N = 3,124$	No relationship with narcissism ( $r = -.02$ ; confidence interval includes zero)
<i>Potential moderators:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Type of job:</i> Specifically, sales jobs where narcissists can be charismatic without having to maintain long-term interpersonal relationships. Soyer, Ravenpor, &amp; Kopelmann (1999) examined sales jobs, but did not find that narcissists performed better, even though it was hypothesized that this would be an ideal job type for narcissists.</li> <li>• <i>Tasks perceived to offer self-enhancement opportunities:</i> For example, tasks framed as difficult or challenging, and/or when an evaluative audience is present (Wallace &amp; Baumeister, 2002).</li> <li>• <i>Tasks perceived as too challenging and having a high risk of failure:</i> Narcissists self-handicap or give up, resulting in poor performance (Rhodewalt, Tragakis, &amp; Finnerty, 2006).</li> <li>• <i>Creativity:</i> They believe they are more creative and are adept at convincing others that they are creative, but are not objectively more creative than individuals low in narcissism. However, in a group setting, narcissism has a curvilinear relationship with creativity. Having more narcissists is better for generating creative outcomes up to a certain point, after which too many narcissists cause distracting conflict (Goncalo et al., 2010).</li> <li>• <i>Chaotic environments:</i> They perform better in chaotic environments where they can push through big organizational changes and have more freedom (Maccoby, 2000).</li> <li>• <i>Job identification:</i> If narcissists identify their job as an important part of their self-worth, the relationship may be positive (Peterson et al., 2012).</li> </ul>		
<b>Job satisfaction</b> (Bruk-Lee et al., 2009)	Meta-analysis	$k = 4; N = 789$	No relationship with narcissism ( $r = -.14$ ; confidence interval includes zero)
<i>Potential moderators:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Type of job:</i> We predict that narcissists are more likely to express satisfaction with jobs they perceive have high status and opportunities for self-enhancement.</li> <li>• <i>Leadership:</i> They may be more likely to enjoy jobs that include leadership roles or leadership opportunities.</li> <li>• <i>Emerging relationships:</i> They may be more satisfied with jobs where they do not have to work with the same people over time (e.g., sales, real estate, etc.). Remember, narcissists have trouble maintaining interpersonal relationships.</li> <li>• <i>Sales jobs:</i> Past research showed a <i>positive</i> relationship between narcissists' job satisfaction with sales jobs and job satisfaction (<math>r = .22</math>; Soyer et al., 1999).</li> </ul>		
<b>Organizational citizenship behavior</b> (Judge, LePine, & Rich, 2006)	Single study	$N = 131$	No relationship with narcissism ( $r = -.14$ ; not statistically significant)
<i>Potential moderators:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Self-enhancement opportunity:</i> They may be more likely to perform citizenship behaviors when they offer the chance for self-enhancement. For example, they may be unlikely to perform anonymous generous acts, but may perform acts that offer opportunities for the positive attention they crave.</li> </ul>		

*Notes:*  $k$  = number of studies in meta-analysis;  $N$  = sample size;  $r$  = observed effect size (for meta-analysis: sample size weighted mean correlation).

personality disorder. Non-pathological narcissism, sometimes called grandiose narcissism, has many of the characteristics described for clinical narcissism, although organizational research typically studies individuals who have lower, less-debilitating levels.

### WHY IS NARCISSISM WORTHY OF STUDY?

There are several reasons why narcissism merits further study by organizational scholars, including (a) its robust relationship with organizational

outcomes, (b) narcissists' difficulty maintaining healthy long-term relationships, and (c) the current socio-historical context in which we are embedded—a financial crisis spurred in part by selfish and/or unethical business decisions—which highlights the importance of personality traits such as narcissism that are associated with unethical and selfish behaviors. Below, we discuss these three reasons in greater depth to illustrate why narcissism deserves additional research attention and integration with other management disciplines.

Narcissism is an increasingly popular topic in organizational research, as evidenced by several recent articles in top organizational journals (e.g., Galvin, Waldman, & Balthazard, 2010; Harms, Spain, & Hannah, 2011; Judge et al., 2006; Judge, Piccolo, & Kosalka, 2009; Nevicka, Ten Velden, De Hoogh, & Van Vianen, 2011b; O'Boyle, Forsyth, Banks, & McDaniel, 2012; Peterson, Galvin, & Lange, 2012; Wu & LeBreton, 2011). This recent research has documented the importance of narcissism by establishing its relation to workplace outcomes, particularly leadership and CWB. For example, substantial evidence shows that narcissists tend to emerge as leaders and that narcissists are found in positions of power such as CEOs and U.S. presidents (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007; Deluga, 1997; Nevicka, De Hoogh, Van Vianen, Beersma, & McIlwain, 2011a). Furthermore, narcissism has been linked to CWB and various specific unethical and exploitative behaviors such as tendencies to cheat, a lack of workplace integrity, and even white-collar crime (Blair, Hoffman, & Helland, 2008; Blickle, Schlegel, Fassbender, & Klein, 2006; Brunell, Staats, Barden, & Hupp, 2011; Campbell, Bush, Brunell, & Shelton, 2005; O'Boyle, Forsyth, Banks, & McDaniel, 2012). Thus, narcissism has a documented relationship with work outcomes.

Second, organizational researchers and managers should be interested in narcissism because narcissists have difficulty maintaining positive relationships over time (Campbell & Foster, 2002; Campbell, Foster, & Finkel, 2002; Paulhus, 1998), and this likely extends to work relationships. For example, a longitudinal study of undergraduates participating in a series of leaderless group discussions revealed that narcissists were first perceived positively and described as "confident, entertaining, and physically attractive," but by the end of the study they were rated as "hostile, arrogant, and cold" (Paulhus, 1998, p. 1204).

The tendency toward interpersonal difficulties is directly relevant to various relational phenomena in the workplace, such as leader-member exchange (LMX; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) and broader theories of relational leadership (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Because narcissists tend to have problems maintaining healthy relationships, we are particularly interested in identifying characteristics of individuals who can work effectively with narcissistic leaders; these characteristics are clarified more extensively later in our Dominance Complementarity Model. It should also be noted that CWB has an interpersonal deviance component (Berry, Ones, &

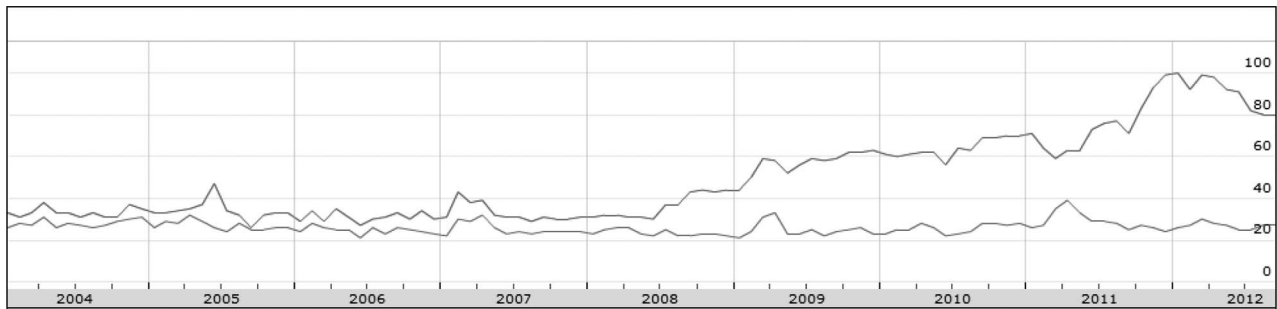
Sackett, 2007), so in this respect the two topics discussed in this paper—CWB and leadership—overlap to the extent that leaders direct interpersonal deviance toward their subordinates. Thus, the topics are inherently associated through their interpersonal elements, particularly when discussing narcissism.

To expand on the interpersonal deficits, Kernberg (1975) wrote that narcissists are "clearly exploitative and sometimes parasitic. It is as if they feel they have the right to control and possess others and to exploit them without guilt feelings—and, behind a surface which very often is charming and engaging, one senses coldness and ruthlessness." (pp. 227–228). Indeed, narcissists can be charismatic when it suits them, but evidence suggests that they are mostly indifferent to interpersonal relationships except as an avenue for self-enhancement. For example, they have low intimacy striving, are generally blind to others' perspectives, and lack empathy (Carroll, 1987; Watson, Grisham, Trotter, & Biderman, 1984). In addition, they have inflated self-views and tend to think they are better than others (Campbell, Reeder, Sedikides, & Elliot, 2000; Farwell & Wohlwend-Lloyd, 1998; Gabriel, Critelli, & Ee, 1994; John & Robins, 1994; Robins & John, 1997). Those characteristics alone would make maintaining relationships difficult, but narcissists can also escalate from being obnoxious to aggressive if they feel threatened. In response to negative feedback, they will derogate others to help maintain their self-esteem and will respond to insults with "exceptionally high levels of aggression toward the source of the insult" (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998, p. 219; Kernis & Sun, 1994; Morf & Rhodewalt, 1993).

Finally, as further evidence that organizational scholars should investigate narcissism, we highlight the fact that the public is increasingly interested and aware of narcissism. It seems that almost everyone has a story about a current or former coworker who fits the profile of a narcissist. Consistent with the logic behind the "lexical" approach to studying the factor structure of personality (i.e., assuming that the most important aspects of personality are encoded into spoken and written language; Saucier & Goldberg, 2001), narcissism appears to play an important role in peoples' lives due to the frequent use of the word in common vernacular.

To index popular interest in narcissism, we used Google Insights, which analyzes a portion of the searches performed with the Google search engine

**FIGURE 1**  
**Results From Google Insights for the Search Terms *Narcissism* and *Narcissistic***



*Note:* Trends in the appearance of the Google search words *narcissistic* and *narcissism* between 2004 and 2012. The y-axis shows the relative frequency of the specified search terms appearing over time, or how many searches have been done for a particular term relative to the total number of Google searches performed over time. The term *narcissistic* is used more frequently, and thus is identified by the line closer to the top of the figure.

to compute how many searches have been done for a particular keyword or phrase relative to total searches (see Figure 1). We found that searches for *narcissism* remained relatively stable from 2004 to 2012, and searches for *narcissistic* began increasing about 2008.<sup>3</sup> The year 2008 coincided with the publication and popularization of research showing that narcissism increased among America's undergraduate population from the 1980s to 2006—leading the authors to identify a subpopulation they called “Generation Me” (Twenge, Konrath, Foster, Campbell, & Bushman, 2008). Other researchers have questioned whether narcissism is really increasing, instead suggesting that narcissism is a normal phase of young adult development (Roberts, Edmonds, & Grijalva, 2010; Trzesniewski, Donnellan, & Robins, 2008).

Regardless of whether narcissism is rising or has remained stable, we believe it is particularly relevant in the current socio-historical context. As the world reels from a financial crisis brought on partly by unethical business practices, management researchers and practitioners should desire to discover what compels individuals and organizations to act unethically or in their self-interest at the expense of others. Accordingly, narcissism is, by its very definition, an individual difference associated with selfish, exploitative behaviors, and is clearly valuable in our attempt to understand unethical and destructive workplace behaviors (Emmons, 1987; Raskin & Terry, 1988). It should be noted that by focusing on narcissism, we do not imply that it is the sole cause of unethical or destructive work-

place behaviors. Indeed, issues of context and organizational systems play a large role in predicting workplace deviance. Narcissism can be viewed, instead, as a risk factor for predicting whether an individual will perform CWB and/or destructive leadership behaviors, and it is the combination of narcissism and conducive environments that generate the worst outcomes. In a later section, we will discuss how contextual variables, such as an organization's ethical climate, affect narcissistic behavior.

### THE IMPACT OF NARCISSISM

In this section we examine more closely narcissism's relationship with CWB and leadership, summarizing the extant literature and then examining the generative mechanisms linking narcissism with CWB, as well as drawing on dominance complementarity theory to consider how followers' characteristics may affect the quality of the narcissistic leader–follower exchange relationship.

Meta-analysis is commonly used to combine results from numerous individual studies to yield a single numerical estimate of relationship strength. Generally, the single numerical estimate is considered more trustworthy and reliable than individual study results. A recent meta-analytic review showed that narcissism is strongly related to CWB ( $r = .35$ ): Individuals high in narcissism were much more likely to harm their organizations or organizational members than were individuals low in narcissism (O'Boyle et al., 2012). We need no longer ask whether a relationship exists, but rather we must determine *why* narcissism and CWB are related.

<sup>3</sup> Google Insights searches begin with 2004.

Therefore, in this section, we explore variables that potentially mediate the relationship between narcissism and CWB. Mediator variables represent the generative mechanism through which an independent variable influences a dependent variable and tell why or how a relationship exists (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

One unexplored potential generative mechanism is the role of perceived organizational justice in narcissistic behavior. Perceptions of organizational justice are relevant because they are a leading antecedent of CWB (Berry et al., 2007). As narcissists sincerely believe that they are better than others and deserve special treatment, we propose that when they receive external feedback that conflicts with their positive self-image, such as being denied a promotion or being reprimanded by a supervisor, narcissists will attribute the undesirable feedback to unfairness. Relatedly, past researchers have theorized that narcissists' self-esteem maintenance repertoire includes *intrapersonal* self-regulation processes used to form "biased interpretations of social feedback and performance outcomes," such as selectively focusing on some environmental stimuli while ignoring others as well as selective or distorted recall of past events (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001, p. 181).

Many intrapersonal processes likely occur outside narcissists' conscious awareness. For example, they are apparently so oblivious to their own performance levels that they may fail to process information that diverges from their positive self-views (Robins & John, 1997). In one study, individuals participated in leaderless group discussions and immediately afterward ranked how well they performed compared with other group members. Then they viewed a video of the group discussion. The researchers expected that most participants would more accurately lower their performance ratings after watching the video. As expected, non-narcissistic individuals reduced estimates of their performance to more accurately reflect objective reality, as established by expert rankings, but narcissists responded to this "objective" feedback by increasing their ranking even higher than their original estimate (Robins & John, 1997). Thus, we predict that highly narcissistic individuals are more likely to report organizational injustice because their perceptual biases lead them to perceive themselves and their performance much more positively than do objective observers—leading to a discrepancy between their high expectations and reality. Little research has been done in this area, so future re-

search should consider the fruitful area of narcissism's relationship with organizational justice.

The theory of threatened egotism and aggression (Penney & Spector, 2002) provides a second generative mechanism: Individuals who are high in self-esteem and are hypersensitive to threats to their self-esteem are more likely to experience negative emotions (fear, anger, frustration, hostility, etc.), which subsequently lead to aggressive outbursts. For example, Penney and Spector (2002) found that individuals high in narcissism, as a measure of egotism, experienced more anger and committed more CWB than individuals low in narcissism. Also, consistent with the theory, anger preceded aggression, suggesting that anger causes narcissists to engage in CWB. Many other studies have linked narcissism with aggression, particularly in response to self-esteem threats (Bushman & Baumeister, 2002; Horton & Sedikides, 2009; Horvath & Morf, 2009; Kernis & Sun, 1994).

The workplace is full of potential self-esteem threats—poor performance reviews, competition from coworkers, difficulty mastering new technologies, failed projects—and highly narcissistic individuals are hypervigilant to perceived threats and predisposed to interpret ambiguous stimuli as threatening (Bushman & Baumeister, 2002; Judge et al., 2006). Thus, the positive relationship between narcissism and CWB may be at least partially explained by narcissists lashing out at their company or coworkers because of negative emotions triggered by threats to self-esteem. Recently, attention has focused on the role that negative emotions play in CWB, with evidence supporting that at least some CWB happens in the heat of the moment, as an impulsive response to negative affect (Dalal, Lam, Weiss, Welch, & Hulin, 2009; Yang & Diefendorff, 2009).

In addition to the role that negative emotions play in relation to CWB, narcissists are also impulsive; that is, they are more likely to act on their negative emotions (Vazire & Funder, 2006). Indeed, narcissism has a moderate positive meta-analytic correlation with impulsivity ( $r = .34$ ; Vazire & Funder, 2006). Specifically, narcissism is associated with high approach and low avoidance motivation, suggesting that narcissists have heightened sensitivity to rewards coupled with muted sensitivity to punishment (Foster & Trimm, 2008). Consistent with these findings, narcissists engage more frequently in actions that offer short-term rewards but long-term costs. For example, they are prone to alcohol abuse and pathological gambling (Luhtanen & Crocker,

2005; Lakey, Goodie, & Campbell, 2007). Also, “narcissism is associated with infidelity, game playing, and low commitment,” all indicating capitalization on short-term gains at the expense of long-term relationship stability (Foster & Campbell, 2005, p. 551). In the work context, narcissistic CEOs favor bold, risky actions (e.g., many sizable acquisitions) leading to unpredictably large gains or losses (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007). On average, companies run by narcissistic CEOs perform no worse than those run by non-narcissistic CEOs, but their performance is more unpredictable (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007). Therefore, building on the theory of threatened egotism and aggression, we propose that when narcissists experience threats to their self-esteem they experience and frequently act on anger because of impulse control deficiencies, even though CWB may cause negative long-term consequences if they are caught.

**Practical implications: How to prevent or reduce narcissists’ CWB.** Now that we have outlined pathways through which narcissism may be related to CWB, we use the information gained from this review to recommend specifically how organizations can counteract narcissists’ CWB (see Table 2 for a summary).

First, because narcissists often perceive their abilities inaccurately and distort recollections of past events, in the event of negative behavior, supervisors should confront them with specific, behavior-based feedback and carefully explain decision-making processes that led to disciplinary actions. Regardless, narcissists will likely believe they are being treated unfairly, so supervisors should thoroughly document instances of inappropriate or prohibited behavior and consider including objective observers such as HR or union representatives at performance evaluation meetings. It is reasonable to assume that narcissists will continue to have excuses for their behavior, so it is in the supervisor’s and organization’s best interest to have documentation on hand in case narcissistic employees challenge disciplinary decisions.

**TABLE 2**  
**Responding to Narcissists’ Counterproductive Work Behavior in Your Organization**

- 
1. Provide specific behavior-based feedback.
  2. Be aware of narcissists’ CWB tendencies.
  3. Provide an environment conducive to ethical behavior.
  4. Increase organizational monitoring.
- 

Second, supervisors and organizations should be aware that narcissistic individuals handle negative feedback poorly and will likely react to self-esteem threats with overt or covert destructive behaviors. Increased organizational awareness may enable them to monitor individuals during vulnerable periods such as after they receive negative feedback, detecting and preventing CWB before it occurs.

Third, the O’Boyle and colleagues (2012) meta-analysis found that narcissism had a weaker relationship with CWB in organizations with in-group collectivist cultures (IGC) that “emphasize duty and loyalty to the organization and its members, cohesiveness among coworkers and relatedness among peers” (O’Boyle et al., 2012, p. 5). Apparently, narcissists are less likely to harm their organization or coworkers when they work in environments that discourage selfish, exploitative behaviors and encourage teamwork rather than competition. Organizations concerned about increased CWB can emphasize values consistent with IGC. For example, supervisors can structure job tasks so that there is less competition and encourage “team building” activities to increase group cohesiveness.

In addition, researchers have identified workplace environments that promote ethical behavior such as ethical climate, culture, and codes of conduct (Kish-Gephart, Harrison, & Treviño, 2010). An organization’s ethical climate is based on beliefs that most organizational members hold and follow about ethically acceptable behavior (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010; Martin & Cullen, 2006). Thus, unethical behaviors are less likely in “benevolent” climates where the focus is on caring for others, similar to the IGC culture (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010). In addition, given that narcissism may also be more problematic in organizations that lack formal ethical codes of conduct or fail to enforce their codes (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010), we recommend that organizations adopt an ethical code of conduct, if they lack one. If a code exists, it should be enforced consistently to ensure employees realize that ethical behavior is important to their company.

Finally, Kets de Vries and Miller (1985) suggested that organizations should implement safeguards such as checks and balances and executive training to keep narcissists under control. Unfortunately, executive training or any other training aimed at improving narcissists’ behavior presents difficulties because narcissists may resent interventions (Collins, 2001). As we have not yet established the efficacy of training narcissists to change their behavior, we instead recommend that organi-

zations provide checks and balances for employees who display reckless or harmful behavior. This recommendation especially applies to employees in upper management who have the power to seriously damage their organizations. Future research should investigate the efficacy of interventions and executive training designed to curb narcissists' harmful behaviors.

### Narcissism and Leadership

Narcissism's relationship with leadership is less clear-cut than its relationship with CWB. For example, the media frequently blame narcissism for the sexual indiscretions of politicians (for example, "John Edwards' Downward Spiral Fueled by Narcissism"; Hudson, 2012) and the unethical behavior of powerful businesspersons (e.g., "Putting Bernie Madoff on the Couch"; Kluger, 2008). Media accounts of well-known business and political leaders suggest a negative association between narcissism and leadership, but past empirical studies relating narcissism to leadership have offered mixed results, some negative and some positive (Blair et al., 2008; Galvin et al., 2010; Judge et al., 2006; Maccoby, 2000; Resick, Whitman, Weingarden, & Hiller, 2009; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). Thus, narcissism is likely moderated by an unidentified set of variables causing a complex relationship with leadership that is neither wholly positive nor completely negative.

Despite the literature's lack of consensus, some findings have been consistent. First, narcissism is associated with a deep yearning for leadership roles (Carroll, 1987; Raskin & Novacek, 1991). Narcissists' innate desire for status and power may lead them to hold more leadership roles partly because they self-nominate for available leadership positions (Hogan, Raskin, & Fazzini, 1990). Second, narcissism is consistently positively related to leadership emergence, as rated by both group members and expert raters (Back, Schmukle, & Egloff, 2010; Brunell et al., 2008; Nevicka et al., 2011a, 2011b; Paulhus, 1998; Raskin & Novacek, 1991; Schnure, 2010). This positive relationship has been attributed to the fact that many characteristics associated with narcissism, such as high self-esteem, dominance, and extraversion, match stereotypes of prototypical leaders (Ensari, Riggio, Christian, & Carslaw, 2011; Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002).

Moreover, narcissists create positive first impressions because they tend to be well-dressed, use

charming facial expressions, appear self-confident, and use more verbal humor than do individuals low in narcissism (Back et al., 2010). Thus, narcissists tend to appear charismatic and attractive under minimal acquaintance, such as during job interviews (Back et al., 2010; Brunell et al., 2008; Nevicka et al., 2011a). A recent study demonstrated that narcissists are perceived as more competent than other job applicants, primarily because they are so willing to talk at length about themselves (Paulhus, Westlake, Calvez, & Harms, 2013). Interestingly, the authors found that when an expert challenged narcissists' claims, they doubled down and increased their levels of self-promotion. These research findings closely match prior research demonstrating that narcissists are better at marketing their ideas, even if they are not necessarily more creative (Goncalo et al., 2010).

Third, the inconsistent results from past studies concern narcissism's relationship with *leadership effectiveness* or how well narcissists perform in leadership roles (Benson & Campbell, 2007; Blair et al., 2008; Galvin et al., 2010; Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994; Judge et al., 2006). For example, one study used two samples to report leadership effectiveness; in the first sample, the authors found a significant positive relationship between narcissism and supervisor-rated leadership effectiveness, but in the second sample they found a slightly negative (although not statistically significant) relationship (Judge et al., 2006).

Other researchers, however, have found that narcissists tend to be ineffective leaders. For example, a sample of CEOs from the technology sector revealed that narcissism negatively predicted servant leadership (a form of leadership that focuses on followers' needs and personal integrity), and that servant leadership subsequently predicted firm financial performance (Peterson et al., 2012). Other complementary research found that supervisors rate their narcissistic employees negatively on the interpersonal and ethical components of leadership, but narcissism was unrelated to task-specific components of leadership such as judgment and decision making (Blair et al., 2008).

Of course, we do not want to overemphasize the research suggesting that narcissists make poor leaders because, in addition to Judge and colleagues (2006), other studies have also reported a positive relationship between narcissism and leadership effectiveness. For example, some components of narcissism were discovered to be positively linked to charismatic leadership (Galvin et al., 2010). Specif-



ically, narcissism positively predicts visionary boldness (e.g., effective communication) in charismatic leadership, but negatively relates to socialized vision (e.g., altruistic and ethical behaviors). A common theme throughout these findings is that narcissists do not appear to excel at the interpersonal or ethical aspects of leadership. Because leadership is a complex criterion, it would be beneficial for future researchers to examine narcissism's relationships with the different subcomponents of leadership (such as task, interpersonal, charismatic, and ethical leadership) rather than overall leadership ability.

In summary, narcissists are attracted to leadership roles and tend to emerge as leaders; therefore, it is particularly important to clarify whether they make good leaders. The answer to this question has clear policy implications for organizations, such as whether organizations should try to screen out narcissists as part of the selection and promotion process for leadership positions. Because of the history of mixed results, we suggest that future research should focus on identifying boundary conditions affecting the relationship between narcissism and leadership effectiveness. What circumstances allow narcissists to provide more (or less) effective leadership? To this end, we examine the dynamic interaction of narcissists' characteristics with those of their followers and the context comprising the leader-follower exchange relationship.

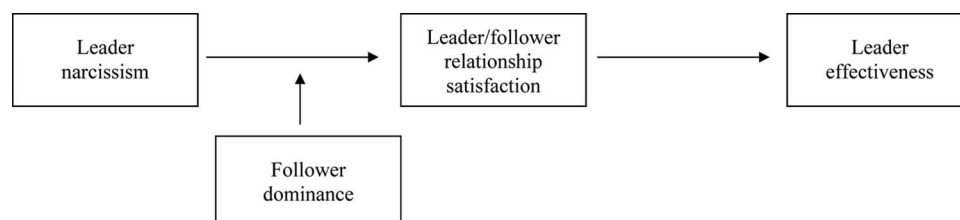
**Narcissistic Leaders and Dominance Complementarity Model.** As leadership scholarship has matured, it has become increasingly apparent that leadership is not just about the leader (Day, 2012; Uhl-Bien, 2006). Leadership is a two-way influence process, and the follower's role has begun to garner additional attention (e.g., Baker, 2007; Carsten, Uhl-Bien, West, Patera, & McGregor, 2010; Hollander, 1992; Uhl-Bien, 2006). Interpersonal complementarity theory provides a useful framework for studying how supervisor and follower characteristics mutually influence one another by specif-

ically investigating "the ways in which the interactional behavior of pairs of people may fit together and influence each other" (Sadler, Ethier, & Woody, 2011, p. 123).

Traditionally, the dominant framework for studying complementarity has been the interpersonal circumplex (Leary, 1957), represented by two independent dimensions—affiliation and dominance—that make up the horizontal and vertical axes of a Cartesian plane (Kiesler, 1996; Sadler et al., 2011). Research has consistently found that "complementarity" requires similar levels of affiliation and opposite levels of dominance (Carson, 1969; Kiesler, 1996; Leary, 1957; Sadler, Ethier, Gunn, Duong, & Woody, 2009; Sadler & Woody, 2003). In other words, friendly behavior begets friendly behavior and hostile behavior invokes hostile behavior, but dominant behavior is more likely to invite submissive behavior. In addition, interpersonal complementarity (i.e., "sameness on the affiliation dimension and oppositeness on the dominance dimension"; Sadler and colleagues, 2011, p. 126) leads to more satisfying and harmonious relationships (Dryer & Horowitz, 1997; Kiesler, 1996; Shechtman & Horowitz, 2006). For example, in a laboratory experiment, participants were more satisfied when they were paired with an experimental confederate who expressed dominance levels opposing their own expressed dominance goals (Dryer & Horowitz, 1997). Similarly, when dominant participants were paired with highly dominant partners, the participants expressed increased anger toward their partners (Shechtman & Horowitz, 2006).

We are specifically interested in applying the knowledge gained from interpersonal complementarity theory to develop a framework for measuring how followers' dominance levels impact narcissistic leaders' effectiveness. Figure 2 depicts our proposed Narcissistic Leaders and Dominance Complementarity Model.

**FIGURE 2**  
**Narcissistic Leaders and Dominance Complementarity Model**



First, narcissism is positively associated with dominance (Bradlee & Emmons, 1992; Emmons, 1987; Raskin & Terry, 1988). Thus, consistent with dominance complementarity theory, we predict that submissive followers will work more harmoniously with narcissistic leaders, and that the leader–follower relationship will be more satisfying for both parties.

In addition to subjective perceptions such as satisfaction, evidence also shows that complementary relationships yield more objectively productive outcomes (e.g., Estroff & Nowicki, 1992; Grant, Gino, & Hoffmann, 2011). For example, a study collected leadership data from a U.S. pizza delivery chain in which leaders were local store managers, one per store, and leadership effectiveness was based on objective group performance yielding overall store profitability (Grant et al., 2011). The results showed that dominant leaders enhanced group performance when subordinates were passive, but that effect was reversed when subordinates were more dominant and proactive. The study's authors provided a potential explanation: Extraverted leaders were less productive when they had proactive followers because they felt threatened and therefore resisted feedback, which left followers less motivated. By contrast, less-extraverted leaders may have been more open to feedback, so they could work effectively with dominant, proactive followers. This implies that the effect of follower dominance on leader effectiveness may be at least partially mediated by the quality of the leader–follower exchange relationship or by how satisfied leaders and followers are with their relationship.

**Conducive environments.** The Narcissistic Leaders and Dominance Complementarity Model somewhat contradicts predictions of the “toxic triangle” comprising destructive leaders, susceptible followers, and conducive environments, which described susceptible followers as being “unable or unwilling to resist domineering and abusive leaders” (Padilla, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2007, p. 183). Followers who are low in dominance appear to be consistent with the definition provided for susceptible followers. However, the key to whether the narcissistic leader/passive follower relationship generates destructive leadership may rely on the third element in the toxic triangle: conducive environments. As mentioned previously, narcissists appear to behave less destructively when they work in ethical climates/cultures, under enforced ethical codes of conduct, and in IGC cultures that value communal goals

such as loyalty and caring for group members (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010; O’Boyle et al., 2012). In contrast, egoistic climates where people tend to put their own interests above others and/or competitive organizational cultures may provide environments conducive to narcissists’ worst destructive tendencies, unintentionally encouraging or passively allowing more toxic behavior.

In addition, although this is not strictly a contextual variable, we are interested in the effect of a leader’s hierarchical level because increased occupational success and power may lead individuals to become more narcissistic. The developmental personality literature suggests that traits develop in a corresponsive manner (Harms, Roberts, & Winter, 2006; Roberts, Wood, & Caspi, 2008). That is, the traits that lead to success in a domain are also likely to develop in response to success in that domain. This would suggest that narcissism may be positively related to a leader’s hierarchical level. Repeated success, especially despite others’ doubt, may convince leaders with latent narcissistic tendencies that they really are better than others. Unfortunately, leaders in upper management may have fewer checks and balances to monitor and control their behavior, thus allowing the potential for greater fallout. Little research has considered how narcissism levels change over time. Future research should conduct longitudinal studies examining whether some individuals become more narcissistic after they experience occupational success.

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

### The Role of Narcissism in Other Management Disciplines

The Narcissistic Leaders and Dominance Complementarity Model introduces concepts that extend beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries. It is useful for scholars in different management disciplines who are conducting narcissism research to consider whether a wide variety of organizational outcomes—such as negotiation results, entrepreneurial success, and expatriates’ success—may be affected by the interaction of narcissists’ characteristics with those of their coworkers. For example, the Narcissistic Leaders and Dominance Complementarity Model suggests that pairing submissive coworkers with narcissistic coworkers always leads to better outcomes. This is likely true on average but is also an overly simplistic generalization, and we encourage scholars to search for exceptions

within their specific disciplines. In the next section, we explore several avenues for research under the broad umbrella of management: international management, ethics and corporate social responsibility, negotiation, and entrepreneurship.

**International management.** Compared with research regarding the Big Five personality traits, narcissism has attracted relatively little cross-cultural research, which is traditionally approached from either an etic or an emic perspective. The etic approach exports measures developed primarily in English to other countries by translating survey items and attempting to establish measurement equivalence, which refers to a statistical process used to establish whether a survey is measuring the same construct or concept in different cultures or languages. The emic approach is used to “*explore* other cultures in order to *discover* psychological variations that are not present in one’s own limited cultural experience” (Berry, Poortinga, Marshall, & Dasen, 2002, p. 3). Usually the emic approach involves developing new surveys without assuming that a particular personality trait manifests itself identically across different cultures.

We know of only a few studies that have examined narcissism from a cross-cultural perspective (Kansi, 2003; Tanchotsrinon, Maneesri, & Campbell, 2007). Lacking significant empirical evidence, we need further research using both etic and emic approaches—preferably combining the two. In an etic approach, researchers could translate the most popular non-pathological narcissism inventory, the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI), into different languages and administer it in a diverse and representative set of cultures (Ronen & Shenkar, 1986). Researchers would then examine the survey’s measurement equivalence to determine whether mean differences can be compared across countries. Assuming they find measurement equivalence, the field could begin determining whether narcissism levels are higher in Westernized, individualistic cultures than in collectivistic cultures. An emic approach would involve using methods such as interviews to develop new measures of narcissism that are more relevant to a particular culture. Culture-specific measures of narcissism would allow the identification of unique narcissism manifestations but not enable comparisons of narcissism levels across cultures. Thus, it is vital for future cross-cultural narcissism research to proceed using both approaches.

Despite a lack of research, we believe narcissism exists across cultures, although it may manifest

differently based on cultural norms. In support of this belief, recent meta-analyses have demonstrated that Westerners have a greater tendency to self-enhance (Heine & Hamamura, 2007), but both Westerners and Easterners engage in tactical self-enhancement according to their cultural ideals (Sedikides, Gaertner, & Vevea, 2005). Specifically, Westerners self-enhance with regard to their uniqueness and independence, whereas Easterners self-enhance with regard to their connectedness and social harmony. Consequently, evidence of narcissism in the workplace in Eastern cultures is likely to be manifested differently than it is in the West.

To illustrate the complexities surrounding the study of narcissism in non-Western cultures, consider Japan, a collectivist culture where narcissistic tendencies seem unlikely (Davies & Ikeno, 2002). A famous Japanese proverb, *deru kui wa utareru* (the nail that sticks up gets hammered down), illustrates why narcissists may find it difficult to function in such a society, where humility is a virtue and individuals are expected to operate in the group context (Davies & Ikeno, 2002; Kawasaki, 1955). For example, leaders who ignore others’ input and attempt to take all the credit for group successes are called “one-man” (Feiler, 2004) or *dokusai* (dictator). This leadership style is considered highly negative, and any failures are attributed to the leader alone.

Although this leadership style is perceived to be rare, there is some indication that changes are occurring in the prevalence and manifestation of narcissism in Japan. Recent research by David Matsu-moto (2002) has demonstrated that Japan’s cultural values are shifting toward individualism and self-centeredness, particularly in the younger generation. Perhaps nothing better illustrates this trend than the case of Livedoor founder Horie Takafumi, who is probably not the first high-profile narcissist in Japan but does constitute an extreme and interesting example of narcissism’s manifestation in Japanese leaders. A university dropout who wore T-shirts to meetings with other business leaders, Takafumi was initially seen as representing an emergent entrepreneurial style of leadership in Japan. The wealth generated from his fast-growing Internet portal enabled him to attempt takeovers of a sports team and a television station, to run for political office, and to announce plans for a space tourism project. But his rise to prominence was short-lived. To the relief of old-school business interests in Japan, Takafumi was eventually convicted of securities fraud and stripped of his con-

trol over Livedoor. In both his meteoric rise and sudden fall, it is easy to see the impact of narcissism in the life of Horie Takafumi. His penchant for risk-taking and attention-getting behaviors served him well in launching a company in the fast-moving technology sector, but also precipitated his downfall by driving him to take ever-greater risks. Takafumi's life story foreshadows issues we will raise later in the section on entrepreneurship.

A second cross-cultural question requiring further research is what will happen when successful narcissists are sent to work abroad, especially from individualistic to collectivistic countries. Narcissists' sense of entitlement could blind them to the need to adapt to cultural norms, could alienate coworkers, and could harm a company's international relations. For example, Steve Jobs was well known for adhering to his typical narcissistic style when he traveled abroad on business. When he was in Europe in the 1980s, a coworker described him as being "just completely obnoxious and thinking he could get away with anything," refusing to attend important meetings, and bluntly telling business managers that they did not deserve to sell the Mac (Isaacson, 2011, p. 184). If it is determined that narcissists make unsuccessful expatriates because they do not adapt their interpersonal style abroad, then organizations could take this information into consideration when deciding which employees to assign abroad. Thus, it is directly relevant to international human resource management (HRM) to determine whether narcissists tend to be unsuccessful expatriates. Finally, within the international management domain, there could be some interesting exceptions to the Narcissistic Leaders and Dominance Complementarity Model related to sending narcissists from individualistic cultures to work in communal cultures, where submissive coworkers may be offended by narcissists' behavior.

#### ***Ethics and corporate social responsibility.***

Given that CWB and narcissism have such a robust relationship, it is no wonder that many scholars have argued that narcissism is a driving force for unethical behavior in the workplace (e.g., Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Hogan et al., 1990; House & Howell, 1992; Kets de Vries & Miller, 1985). Blair and colleagues (2008, p. 255) contended that "the one construct that researchers have continually linked to a leader's proclivity to behave ineffectively and unethically is narcissism." Therefore, we suggest that additional ethical management research should further examine narcissism as an antecedent to unethical behaviors.

As mentioned previously, narcissism is linked to lower supervisor ratings of integrity and a higher propensity to commit white-collar crime (Blair et al., 2008; Blickle et al., 2006; Mumford, Connelly, Helton, Strange, & Osburn, 2001). Moreover, recent research using business students found a negative relationship between narcissism and moral decision making (Brown, Sautter, Littvay, Sautter, & Bearnes, 2010). The education literature has shown that narcissists are more likely to cheat and has suggested several mechanisms to explain the relationship that may also help explain immoral workplace behaviors (Brown, Budzek, & Tamborski, 2009; Brunell et al., 2011; Williams, Nathanson, & Paulhus, 2010). For example, narcissists reported less guilt after cheating (Brunell et al., 2011), perhaps stemming from their tendency to rationalize cheating either by denying they are cheating or by convincing themselves they have the right to cheat (Brown et al., 2009). Their lack of guilt and tendencies to rationalize unethical behaviors provide insight into their unethical workplace behaviors.

Beyond the ethics problems directly attributable to narcissistic employees, unethical behavior can contaminate others if left unchecked (Ashkanasy, Windsor, & Trevino, 2006; Kish-Gephart et al., 2010). Unethical employees can create an organizational culture where unethical behavior becomes the norm, especially when leaders or authority figures are misbehaving. Future research should examine whether narcissists will take advantage of their more submissive coworkers. The dominance complementarity model proposes that narcissists will have more productive and enjoyable working relationships with individuals low in dominance, but other scholars (Padilla et al., 2007) suggest that these submissive individuals may be vulnerable to narcissists' exploitative tendencies. Therefore, it should also be examined whether narcissists take advantage of their coworkers who are low in dominance, and if so, whether the relationships become abusive (Tepper, 2000).

Related to ethical behavior is corporate social responsibility (CSR). Although CSR is widely considered positive, the motivations driving it may be ignoble. For example, rather than striving for social responsibility, a narcissistic leader may simply use CSR to garner positive attention (Roberts, 2001, 2003; Spence, 2009). When efforts to create an appearance of virtue are insincere, the virtuous image will ultimately be undermined because organizations characterized by selfish motives ignore negative feedback (Brown, 1997; Duchon & Drake,

2008). In other words, when narcissistic leaders' CSR efforts are ineffective, they are likely to attribute failures to situational factors or scapegoats. Consequently, both organizational insiders and outsiders will eventually see insincerity in their CSR efforts, evoking cynicism. Specifically, research should examine whether corporations run by narcissistic CEOs attempt fewer or have less-successful CSR activities.

**Negotiation.** Negotiation research represents a potentially rich environment for studying narcissism in the workplace (Greenhalgh & Gilkey, 1997). Negotiation is typically defined as a discussion between parties to resolve opposing interests when parties desire the same scarce resources (Carnevale & Pruitt, 1992). Relatively little negotiation research has explored personality traits, particularly aberrant traits such as narcissism. Aberrant traits are potentially useful because they represent extreme manifestations of personality that more common trait paradigms such as the Big Five, with their focus on the more positive side of personality, have not fully addressed. We argue that aberrant traits, such as narcissism, are directly associated with interpersonal and ethical behaviors that are relevant to negotiation behavior and outcomes.

We might expect that narcissists are particularly effective negotiators, at least sometimes, because they strive boldly to get what they want and lack empathy for opposing sides (Campbell et al., 2005; Watson et al., 1984). For example, in a memorable negotiation between the Lucasfilm graphics division (later known as Pixar) and Steve Jobs, who was offering to buy the division, the chief financial officer (CFO) of Lucasfilm attempted to undermine Jobs by coming to the meeting late, as a show of dominance. "But a funny thing happened. . . . Steve started the meeting on time without the CFO, and by the time the CFO walked in Steve was already in control of the meeting" (Isaacson, 2011, p. 239).

However, narcissists' negotiation strategies also have a darker side. Some cautionary research illustrates the possible social consequences of narcissists' selfish negotiation strategies. Using a classic commons dilemma paradigm, a lab-based study presented participants with a scenario in which they worked for a forestry company competing against other companies to harvest timber from a renewable forest (Campbell et al., 2005). In multiple studies, narcissists chose to quickly deplete the limited timber resource, yielding short-term personal gains but resulting in less timber being harvested, rapid deforestation, and common resource

exhaustion. This type of social dilemma task illustrates that short-term, selfish decisions may have devastating consequences for the broader community. Research conducted outside of a laboratory setting to confirm narcissists' exploitative tendencies in real-life negotiation settings is also merited.

In addition, an expansive literature concerning motivational orientations in negotiations has shown that an individualistic orientation, or exclusive concern about one's own outcomes, actually yields poorer overall outcomes (De Dreu, Weingart, & Kwon, 2000) because an individualistic orientation generates contentious bargaining strategies, threats, and impasses. Narcissism is most likely associated with an individualistic orientation, as illustrated by narcissists' documented propensity to make decisions that benefit them personally with little concern for how their actions may affect others (Campbell et al., 2005). By contrast, a cooperative orientation, or high self-concern coupled with high other-concern, is likely more adaptive because it inspires problem solving, compromise, and joint benefits (Carnevale & Pruitt, 1992; De Dreu et al., 2000).

The same characteristics that make narcissists successful in some situations may also prove detrimental in others. It would be interesting to explore boundary conditions when narcissists are more or less likely to produce successful outcomes. For example, not all negotiations are one-off affairs. Quite often successful negotiations require parties to establish positive relationships over time to discover and agree on trade-offs for optimal solutions. However, given that narcissists cannot sustain positive relationships, they may prove ineffective when negotiations require repeated meetings with the same partners or when their reputations precede them. Relatedly, evidence suggests that the more individuals perceive that particular negotiation tactics are risky to their reputations, the less likely they are to use those tactics (Ma & Parks, 2012). Future research might observe whether narcissists are aware that their selfish behavior poses reputational risks, and if so, whether they will avoid risking their reputations in particular situations. In other words, can practical limitations cause narcissists to adjust their normal selfish negotiation strategies?

The dominance complementarity model also suggests that the personality of the opposite negotiator may determine whether a narcissist is effective in his or her role. Specifically, it could be expected that pairing two individuals with narcissis-

sistic tendencies would be more likely to result in conflict and an inability to compromise or reconcile their positions. However, the organizations choosing the negotiators are unlikely to choose a submissive representative simply to ensure a smoother negotiation process. Consequently, the pairing of two narcissistic individuals and the resulting unnecessary escalation of conflict may be an unfortunate but sadly common occurrence.

**Entrepreneurship.** Finally, the act of creating a firm may be indicative of narcissistic tendencies. Starting a business is difficult, and failure rates are high. Thus, believing that one can overcome the odds almost certainly reflects an impressive amount of self-confidence (Busenitz & Barney, 1997) and an appetite for risk-taking (Stewart, Watson, Carland, & Carland, 1998). Indeed, Kets de Vries (1996) argued that many entrepreneurs are motivated by narcissistic tendencies.

Some evidence supports the connection between narcissism and entrepreneurship. For example, narcissism has been found to be positively related to entrepreneurial intentions (Kramer, Cesinger, Schwarzinger, & Gelléri, 2011). Also, evidence shows that narcissists may have an early advantage in garnering support for entrepreneurial endeavors. For example, they are better at “pitching” ideas to others even when their ideas are not necessarily superior to those of others (Goncalo et al., 2010). Thus, narcissism may provide both the motivation and the skills necessary to fuel entrepreneurial activity.

Further, a growing literature suggests that overconfidence, a core characteristic of narcissism, is positively related to entrepreneurial activity (e.g., Baron, 2000a; Busenitz & Barney, 1997). For example, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) project, a large-scale study of 18 countries, focused on identifying and studying individuals who had either started or were starting a business. The study showed that a major factor in determining whether an individual will engage in entrepreneurial activities is whether he or she believes he or she has the skills, knowledge, and ability to do so (Koellinger, Minniti, & Schade, 2005). However, the authors noted that belief in one’s abilities may not reflect actual ability and even argued that self-ratings are characterized by systematic distortions, indicating that overconfidence drives some entrepreneurs.

Other core narcissistic traits, such as risk-taking and self-efficacy, are also believed to drive increased entrepreneurial intentions and activities (Vecchio, 2003). Compared with managers (Hull,

Bosley, & Udell, 1980) and with the population at large (Stewart et al., 1998), entrepreneurs score higher on personality measures designed to assess risk-taking propensity. Likewise, narcissists are more likely to make risky investment decisions (Foster, Reidy, Misra, & Goff, 2011) and to gamble more frequently (Lakey, Rose, Campbell, & Goodie, 2008). Beyond the tendency to make risky decisions, hubristic overconfidence has also been implicated in driving some individuals to ignore past failures and to persist in entrepreneurial activities (Hayward, Forster, Sarasvathy, & Fredrickson, 2010). For example, entrepreneurs were found to be far less likely to engage in counterfactual thinking about their mistakes than were those who were uninterested in starting a business (Baron, 2000b).

Thus, narcissism may be both a blessing and a curse for aspiring entrepreneurs. On one hand, narcissistic individuals may be able to move more easily beyond prior failures. However, by externalizing blame for failures, they are also less likely to adjust their behavior and more likely to repeat their failures. The hubris theory of entrepreneurship (Hayward, Shepherd, & Griffin, 2006) suggests that overconfident founders may be more willing to initiate entrepreneurial activities with smaller resource endowments, commit more resources to focal opportunities, and assume more debt, and that each of these propensities increases the probability that their ventures will eventually fail. Thus, narcissism may help explain why so many entrepreneurs experience difficulties as their firms grow and mature.

Currently, longitudinal research is needed to document the relationship between narcissism and entrepreneurial activities, particularly whether narcissistic tendencies prompt entrepreneurial behaviors and whether exceptionally high levels of narcissism are associated with venture failure. Another potentially fruitful avenue for future study would be to investigate the degree to which entrepreneurial success prompts changes in narcissism. As mentioned in the context of leaders’ hierarchical level, traits that lead to success in a domain are also likely to be reinforced in response to success in that domain. Thus, if narcissistic traits bring success in entrepreneurial endeavors, we would expect this success to reinforce narcissistic traits.

Finally, the dominance complementarity model may shed some light on future research concerning the initial selection of employees by entrepreneurs. Specifically, as an entrepreneur transitions from being self-employed to being an employer, he or

she needs to select employees who will be not only effective performers but also compatible coworkers. The dominance complementarity model suggests that narcissistic entrepreneurs will be more likely to select submissive employees. Moreover, it suggests that startups will be more cohesive if narcissistic entrepreneurs do, in fact, surround themselves with submissive subordinates. However, these tendencies may be self-defeating in the long term, because the narcissistic entrepreneur will be less likely to receive valuable feedback from such employees, who may feel uncomfortable expressing discordant opinions.

### CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, we reviewed the extant organizational narcissism literature and identified research topics and management domains that may benefit from incorporating narcissism into predictions of organizational outcomes. In addition, we proposed a new model to guide future research on the narcissistic leader–follower relationship, which we believe will advance the field’s understandings of narcissistic leaders and their effects. Further, we have provided specific advice for practitioners aimed at reducing or preventing narcissists from performing CWB. We conclude with the sincere hope that our work will inspire future research on the personality characteristic of narcissism.

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