Ethical Leadership’s Influence on the Organizational Identity of Narcissism: A Socio-Rhetorical Analysis of 2 Chronicles 30:1-27

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Abstract

Ethical leadership involves the execution of a behavioral pattern in which a man or woman attempts to lead from a virtuous set of values and beliefs. Ethical leadership investigates relationships between ethical leaders and follower outcomes with more research needed on organizational identity and outcomes. This research provides a socio-rhetorical analysis of Old Testament texture to investigate the relationship of ethical leadership on the organizational identity of narcissism.

*Keywords: ethical leadership, organizational identity, Bible, narcissism*
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Ethical leadership impacts organizational members through modeling, influencing, and identity shaping. Brown, Trevino, and Harrison (2005) advance ethical leadership through social learning theory. Brown et al. (2005) produce empirical research that develops a measure for ethical leadership which identifies outcomes in relationship to organizational members and as a predictor for leaders in organizational settings. Brown et al. state leaders function to impact members through a process of “modeling” (p.119). Brown et al. state role modeling acts as a critical behavior within leadership as such behaviors become learned by observers and over time become integrated behaviors. Ethical leaders represent persons who possess the ability to influence organizational members and function with credibility and promote ethical ideals with clarity (Brown, Trevino, & Harrison, 2005). Ethical leadership has the potential to influence organizational member behavior through exemplification, equitable treatment of members, and stimulation of a climate which affirms ethical behaviors (Mayer, Aquino, Greenbaum, & Keunzi, 2012). Mayer, Aquino, Greenbaum, and Keunzi (2012) summarize the above dimensions as demonstrations of “moral persons” and “moral persons” (p.151). Ethical leaders function as moral agents to offer direction and motivation for members to pursue similar ethical behaviors and ideals which the leader exemplifies (Shaubroeck, Hannah, Avolio, Kozlowski, Lord, Trevinno, Dimotakis, & Peng, 2012). Mayer et al. (2012) state as organizational leaders commit to demonstrate ethical behaviors, organizational members adopt the patterns of behavior and stimulate productive social norms. Mayer et al. further conclude organizational leaders can influence the identity of organizational members through the implementation and construction of various types of materials which promote ethical behaviors and affirm the general internal desire
for persons to be known as ethical. Shaubroeck, Hannah, Avolio, Kozlowski, Lord, Trevino, Dimotakis, and Peng (2012) conduct a study to understand senior level leadership behaviors influence on the behaviors of members throughout various levels of an organization. Shaubroeck et al. (2012) develop a model to demonstrate the influence of senior ethical leadership behavior within the immediate sphere of influence and how such behavior multiplies and integrates throughout an organization. Leaders assist organizations to exegete organizational culture through the use of “surface elements” (Shaubroeck, Hannah, Avolio, Kozlowski, Lord, Trevino, Dimotakis, & Peng, 2012; p.1054). Shaubroeck et al. (2012) state members possess cognition of the ethical culture through a formal means which includes documentation, authority, transactional influences, and member development. Shaubroeck et al. research on the influence of ethical leadership through various levels of organization provokes a consideration on how ethical leaders influence organizational identity. Therefore, organizational leaders who pursue a positive approach to stimulate ethical identity through modeling and influence assist members in understanding and answering the identity question of “Who are we as an organization” (Kreiner, 2011)?

Organizational Identity

Kreiner (2011) states organizational identity extends from the existence of the culture within an organization. The construct of organizational identity reflects an epistemological pursuit to demonstrate how a group and members of that group distinguish themselves from other organizations or social groups (Kreiner, 2011). Kreiner (2011) states the existence of three dimensions of organizational identity; 1) definitional, 2) ideational, and 3) phenomenological. Kreiner (2011) states the definitional dimensions involve core foundational distinctions which exist within the organization. Gizir (2014) states organizational identity can be understood within
the theory of social identity. Persons seek to simplify and create meaning through association with groups that possess core foundational distinctions which offer differentiation from other groups (Gizir, 2014). Gizir (2014) further states identity functions to support a human being’s desire to meet a “need to belong and as an adaptiveness to a complex and changing social environment” (p.1321). The development and research on organizational identity includes an approach on the basis of the social actor perspective (Kreiner, 2011; Oliver, Statler, & Roos, 2009). Kreiner (2011) states the social actor perspective examines the influence of leadership to develop and reinforce stable foundational distinctions. Kreiner (2011) reports the provision of distinguishable characteristics provides membership shared meaning which distinguishes the immediate organization from other organizations. Oliver, Statler, and Roos (2011) propose a relationship between organizational identity and the use of wisdom within the dimensions of balance of interest and balance of responses. The use of wisdom on the basis of balance theory involves decision making that considers the common good especially in moments of uncertainty (Oliver, Statler, & Roos, 2011). Oliver et al. (2011) state the balance of interest considers all interested parties to include leadership, organizational members, and the entire corpus. Oliver et al. conclude that inter-personal interest in the form of communication, stories, and conflict contribute to the creation of organizational identity. Therefore, the wise implementation and communication of various instruments codifies key characteristics of an organizational identity which inform organizational membership.

**Narcissism**

Duchon and Drake (2008) state organizational behavior manifests on the conception of an organization’s view of the self. Duchon and Drake (2008) argue organizational identity corresponds to individual identity which allows consideration of an entity to function as a moral
agent within society. Duchon and Drake (2008) agree with Oliver et al. in which organizational identity arises from situational difficulties, provides members with a framework to understand organizational history, way of life, and how to participate as a member of the organization. Organizational identity provides a framework to understand “commitments, preferences, and practices” which codify the organizational identity beliefs (Duchon & Drake, 2008; p.302). On the basis of Duchon and Drake (2008) contention that organizations corresponds to individuals, organizations with a narcissistic identity produce unethical behaviors. Duchon and Drake (2008) state narcissism represents a personality behavior which involves a high degree of focus on the self and a lack of concern for persons or organization. Narcissism from the within the context of personality represents a behavior that involves self-centeredness, resistance towards change, lack of empathy, and a false sense of acknowledgement, higher that what is socially acceptable (Gardner & Pierce, 2011). The literature report several effects of a narcissistic organizational identity. Duchon and Drake (2008) state narcissism has a positive benefit of organizational protection, yet can become a mechanism in which the organization and its members can experience alienation and oppression. Organizations with narcissism identities resist in-depth ethical change because it will require a transformation of the organization (Duchon & Drake, 2008). Gardner and Pierce (2011) state organizational narcissism can have deleterious impact on members who adopt the organizational identity and reject negative criticism. Narcissism enables organizations to convey a favorable view of the self while actively doubting that positive projection, seeking the need of public affirmation, rejection of negative critiques, and aggression (Gardner & Pierce, 2011). Therefore, extending Duchon and Drake (2008) proposition of organizational identity corresponding to individual identity, an organization through a series of processes projects to its environment a sense of superiority and entitlement.
Method

Garnder and Pierce (2011) propose critique of the narcissism identity requires an approach that addresses the unethical pattern of behavior. How can ethical leadership influence organizational identity deconstruction of narcissism? Ethical leaders function as social actors to cultivate and expand the core dimensions of an organization which provide the distinguishing elements for member identification (Kreiner, 2011). What are the benefits of communication, story, and conflict for ethical leadership in organizational identity formation away from narcissism? The socio-rhetorical analysis of 2 Chronicles 30:1-27 extends the research on ethical leadership, organizational identity, and narcissism. Recent research on the relationship between leadership and narcissism includes, self-esteem (Gardner & Pierce, 2011), transformational leadership (Greaves, Zacher, McKenna, & Roonery, 2014), and leader charisma (Sosik, Chun, & Zhu, 2014).

Analysis of 2 Chronicles 30:1-27

Ideological texture analysis investigate group relationships and conflicts as represented in the written language (Robbins, 1996). Robbins (1996) states groups participate in certain social orders which are held together by ideas, beliefs, and values. Ideological texture analysis investigates the position of the reader or writer, the related groups to which the texture involves, and investigation of power sharing relationships (Robbins, 1996).

King Hezekiah serves as the thirteenth king who rules over the southern kingdom of Judah from approximately 715-686 B.C. The writers of 2 Chronicles characterize King Hezekiah’s reign as in accordance with God’s will done in a humble manner and mimics many of the methods of his predecessor King David (2 Chronicles 29:2; 31:20; 32:26,32, and 33). King
Hezekiah functions from the location of a reformist to address the personal and structural problems within Judah and by extension all of Israel. Robbins (1996) states the reformist position views the world in a condition of depravity and salvation comes through change in these structures and behaviors. Behavioral change occurs as systemic structures are uprooted and replaced with appropriate systems (Robbins, 1996). In the text, King Hezekiah refers to three behaviors which have led to the inactivity, the institutionalization of an ideology, and a self-centeredness of the Judah corpus. King Hezekiah reports the faithless position of Israelite ancestors (2 Chronicles 30:7), the stiff neck posture of the members in the form of idolatry, refusal to change, and rejection of the Israelite identity in favor of other identities (Exodus 32:9; Deuteronomy 9:6, and 2 Kings 17:14). King Hezekiah functions as a reformist which leads to reestablish the proper functions of the temple and the Levitical priests (2 Chronicles 29:3-19), reestablish the temple sacrifices in accordance to the Torah (2 Chronicles 29:24), and reinstitution of the Passover celebration (2 Chronicles 30:1-27). The Passover celebration represents a central communicative narrative which influences Israelite identity. Wright (1992) states the festival along with Pentecost and the feast of Tabernacles influence the identity of the Israelite corpus as the representation of God’s liberated nation among all nations. Hezekiah as the ethical leader works to reinstitute the visual story and practice of Passover which provides a significant definitional element to the kingdom. According to the Exodus narrative, the Passover represents the beginning of Israel’s new year (Exodus 12:1), corporate participation (Exodus 12:6), the mercy of God (Exodus 12:12), functions as a distinguishing element to establish inclusion and exclusion (Exodus 12:19), and a core element current members communicate to successive members of the community (Exodus 12:26-27). Therefore, King Hezekiah ethically
leads to enact a new ideology through specific identification of previous practices and the implementation of new practices which will influence membership behavior.

Robbins (1996) states an organized entity which has a permanent functionality assembles on the basis of core ideals, interest, and identity. A second aspect of corporate groups involves an organization of subgroups to accomplish activities in relationship to each other and the unifying principles (Robbins, 1996). King Hezekiah implements reforms to the identity and associated behaviors of Israel which has presence in the region. All persons who belong to the nation, Israel, Judah, Ephraim, and Manasseh, as well as reform which extends to persons that remain despite historical difficulty (2 Chronicles 30:1, 6). The core principles of deity, community, and work function to unite corporate group in 2 Chronicles 30. The texture demonstrates the primary core ideal centers on the phrase, “God of their fathers” (2 Chronicles 30:6, 8, 9). King Hezekiah refers to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as the central figure who unites the corporate group regardless of geographic location, work duties, or exile. The second core principle within the texture involves the community practice of festivals which serve as a means to assemble the various subgroups. The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread symbolize in action and story the corporate group’s origin regardless of the unethical structures and dispersion. The final core principle which unites the corporate group involves the agreement to accomplish the work of institutional reform as led by King Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 30:12). Subgroups represent a critical aspect of corporate groups in the ideological texture analysis. Specifically, the narcissism ideology presents itself in the response of some members within the geographic subgroups of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Zebulun (2 Chronicles 30:10). The writers describe the change in terms of laughter, scorn, and mocking. The subgroup presents a narcissistic behavior that rejects King Hezekiah’s negative critiques and plan for a new corporate
identity (2 Chronicles 30:7-8). King Hezekiah engages with the entire Israelite corpus which consists of geographically dispersed persons, persons who can implement the procedures to demonstrate the identity, and persons who refuse to participate in the reforms. The corporate sub-texture presents the possibility within organizational identity reform that a subgroup will function to maintain the current behaviors and identity. In this context, the mockers reject the reformist position in favor of the status quo. The rejection does not inhibit the manifestation of new organizational behaviors as the text reveals non-narcissistic behaviors in which the priest work for the non-consecrated (2 Chronicles 30:17), King Hezekiah sympathizes and intercedes for the non-consecrated (2 Chronicles 30:19) and couriers extend the message of the leader to all members of the corpus (2 Chronicles 30:10).

Ideological analysis offers an opportunity to investigate the ideology of power relationships that exist within the texture. Dominant and subordinate power systems exist in the form of monarchial and priestly power. In the Israelite confederacy of nations three primary systems of power prevail; king, prophet, and priest. In the immediate context, the monarchial system of power primarily functions to initiate reforms while the priestly power, subordinates itself to the direction of King Hezekiah. The monarch position originates in response to the tribal groups desire for leadership similar to the surrounding nations (1 Samuel 8:4-9). The Israelite tribal groups subject themselves to human agency and reject divine agency. In the post-Exodus period, Moses institutionalizes the priestly power system at the direction of God (Exodus 28:1-2). The priests function to serve God in the tabernacle and execute the daily and annual for the people of Israel. Therefore, we observe a proper delineation of power within the immediate text as King Hezekiah implements power to gather the diverse groups and simultaneously the priest use power to demonstrate their ideology of service to God and the people that gather in
Jerusalem. Second, King Hezekiah possess power objectives in the reform process of the organizational identity and behavior of the Israelite corpus. King Hezekiah uses power to establish faithful service and covenant with God (2 Chronicles 29:10; 30:8), institution of core national worship practices (2 Chronicles 29-31), and unification of the nation through the Passover celebration (2 Chronicles 30:1). Ideology of power involves the appropriate use of position to reorganize and invigorate an identity and subsequent behavior that corresponds to core organizational values and appropriately supports stakeholders. King Hezekiah implements his ideology on the basis of position, credibility, and technology. King Hezekiah executes power through his monarchial position to communicate to surrounding regions, assemble persons, and logistically support the practices. Second, King Hezekiah’s ability to implement his ideology receives support from his credibility on the basis of previous work in the form of temple cleansing (2 Chronicles 30:3-19) and core worship practices (2 Chronicles 30:20-36). Technology represent the final means in which King Hezekiah is able to use power to implement his ideology. The opening of the texture states King Hezekiah “wrote letters” (2 Chronicles 30:1). Written communication functions as an aspect of technology to communicate information to a group of persons. King Hezekiah uses written communication and couriers to expand his ideology beyond Jerusalem to all regions which consist of Israelite members. The implementation of this form of communication technology results in the assemblage of consecrated and non-consecrated persons who participate in the new ideology with affective commitment.

Discussion
Ethical leadership can influence organizational identity deconstruction of narcissism through the use of personal credibility, problem identification, and incentivization. Derr (2012) states organizational members prefer ethical leadership and positive behavior which members are willing to model. Ethical leadership creates a relationship environment in which members discern trust, equity, and supervisory concern (Brown & Trevino, 2014). An observation of previous southern Judah leadership reveals persons with narcissism behaviors have subsequent influence on the body politic (2 Chronicles 25:14-28; 26:16-22; 28). King Hezekiah provides credibility in his reformist efforts which contributes to the ongoing success to reform the identity of the Israelite corpus (2 Chronicles 30:21, 23-27). A second benefit of ethical leadership on organizational identity involves the clear identification of embedded problems of narcissism. King Hezekiah communicates in written form that past behaviors have produced non-beneficial outcomes for the Israelite corpus in the form of exile (2 Kings 15:30; 17:1-6) and the anger of God because of idolatry (2 Chronicles 30:8). King Hezekiah illuminates the embedded problems and communicates his solutions in accordance to his values and beliefs which should become the identity of the people (Noriega & Drew, 2013). A third means towards the deconstruction of narcissism involves incentivizing ethical behavior. Social actors such as King Hezekiah provide three incentives for ethical behavior of the Israelites in the form of mercy, compassion, and land reclamation (2 Chronicles 30:8-9). LaSala and Bjarnason (2010) state organizational leaders can create organizational systems that provide support for ethical behavior. LaSala and Bjarnason (2010) propose a constant communication of organizational mission and values, communication, and a culture of equity. Therefore, ethical leadership deconstructs an organizational identity of narcissism as leaders identify specific problems and through the leverage of credibility lead
members towards a new identity that produces ethical behaviors and the experience of positive organizational environment.

The ideological analysis reveals the importance of leaders to infuse practices of communication and story with ethical quality in order to implement an ethical identity. King Hezekiah introduces the festival practices of Passover and feast of Unleavened Bread to infuse the Israelite corpus with an identity which corresponds to the God of their fathers. Kreiner (2011) states the social actor works to create different tangible means in which to influence organizational identity and organizational membership view of the organization. The Passover represents a means to answer that organizational identity question, “Who are we as an organization?” In the immediate context, the Israelite corpus understands the birth of the organization through the blood sacrifice and Exodus narrative. The Exodus narrative and the associated communication of that narrative in a tangible practices offers the membership an answer in the context of identity in contrast to the surrounding nations (Hatch, 2011). Organizational leaders who seek to deconstruct narcissism behaviors can implement practices that revisit the organization’s history, reasons for creation, and purpose of existence.

Duchon and Drake (2008) state a necessity exist for organizations with narcissistic identities to possess leaders who infuse ethics with a depth of virtue and identity which permeates the organization. This research contributes to the existing literature in the provision of socio-rhetorical analysis of Old Testament texture and the examination of ethical leadership and organizational identity. Further research on the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational identity can investigate how ethical leadership confronts subgroups in organizations unwilling to adopt a new organizational identity and associated behaviors.
References


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