The Dynamic Interplay of Narcissistic Leadership

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Examples of narcissistic leadership are displayed throughout history. During the French Revolution of the 18th century Napoléon Bonaparte was a military and political influence in Europe. The early 19th century and the economic boom of the Industrial Revolution manufactured tycoons like Henry Ford, Andrew Carnegie, and Nelson Rockefeller in the United States. The recent Technological Revolution during the late 1990’s connected personalities and the influence of individuals like Bill Gates and Steve Jobs around the globe. While the prevailing theme appears to favor the negative view of narcissism recent voices have challenged this notion. Maccoby (2003) suggest that “Narcissists create a vision to change the world” (p. xiv). The current examination of specific personalities, specific traits, and specific cultures surrounding narcissistic leaders is important but short sighted. As shown throughout history the cautious possibility for positive impact of narcissistic leaders should also be considered.

The identification of individual narcissistic personality traits remain an important element of leadership for the 21st century. These perspectives are helpful but miss an important dimension. Much of the debate surrounding narcissistic leaders explains the ‘good’ or ‘bad’ elements of the traits (For example: Hill and Yousey, 1998). Generally viewed as a negative attribute and identified as a psychological personality disorder, narcissistic leaders are described as individuals who lack emotional maturity and have a basic desire for power, prestige, and status at the expense of others (Yukl, 2006). An important shift in the discussion should focus on the interaction of individuals with others including other leaders and followers.

The academic literature also contains studies describing how individual traits are seen in different occupations and cultures. For example Ghorbani, Watson, Hamzavy, and Weathington (2010) examined the dynamics of narcissism and self-esteem in a Muslim society. Investigating
narcissistic leaders and the situations are important to understand possible patterns of behavior, group tendencies, and ways of approaching organizations.

This presentation offers a new framework for the examination of narcissistic leaders through the dynamic interplay of leaders, followers, and situation. As first suggested by Rosenthal and Pittinsky (2006) this exploratory paper seeks to extend the study of narcissistic leaders by offering two examples to start the conversation about the dynamic interplay between leaders, followers, and situation. An Ideological lens (Robbins, 1996) and character study of Judas and Peter as found in the Bible is purposefully chosen. To highlight the dynamic interplay two events have been selected for study: Judas and Jesus Christ at the Last Supper (Matthew 26); and the story of Peter and Jesus Walking on Water (Matthew 14). This first part of the paper outlines the relevant background literature in which two perspectives of narcissistic leadership are described. An Ideological lens will then be explained with a character study of Judas and Peter, followed by the passages from Matthew 26 and Matthew 14. It is hoped that this discussion offers a “more advanced and fruitful discussion about the role of narcissism plays in leadership” (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). The devastating and debilitating effects of narcissism are highlighted but the possible positive impact of narcissistic leaders and the ability to influence and create change in organizational leadership will also be discussed.

**Literature Review**

Narcissism and Toxic leadership are the primary focus of this year’s Virtual Conference on Moral Leadership. The stated focus of the conference this year is to explore “the nature, operation, and the dangers associated with narcissism in organizational leadership.” Commonly considered as an individual who is self-focused and filled with self-love, at the core narcissism is
understood as a focus inward and a curling in on self. Two perspectives of narcissism emerge when examining the literature.

**Two Views of Narcissism**

Stemming from Greek and Greco-Roman mythology the story of Narcissus is well known. From this historical starting point two understandings of narcissism can be developed. The first perspective from the Greeks note that Narcissus was the son of the river Cephissus and the nymph Liriope. As a young man walking along a lake he spies his reflection in the still water. He falls madly in love with the reflection and dies because of his inability to leave his overwhelming beauty. This may be considered the toxic view of narcissistic leadership with the primary focus on self: self-attention, self-admiration, and self-adulation. The second perspective from the Greco-Roman version of the myth is a bit different. Narcissus is so beautiful that many fall in love with him and his path is littered with heart-break. The subtle distinction to highlight is that Narcissus draws individuals towards him. Possibly through his charisma. He breaks the hearts of Echo but also rejects Nemesis who condemns him. Narcissus is then forced to look at his reflection in a pool of water on Mt. Helicon until he dies (Narcissus, 1998, p. 67). A dual understanding of narcissism is developed through these two myths. The Greek version of the story highlights the self-love and inward focus. The Greco-Roman version highlights the charisma of narcissistic leaders to pull people towards themselves or towards a vision. Current literature on the subject appears to weigh towards the negative aspects of narcissism (Greek understanding), but recent questions have started to explore the limited positive elements (Greco-Roman understanding) of narcissistic leaders.
Narcissistic Leadership Defined

Just like other definitions of leadership narrowing down to an understanding of narcissistic leaders is complex. It is helpful to be reminded of the oft quoted phrase from Stogdill and Bass (1990) that “There are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept” (p. 11). Narcissistic leaders are seen by most in the popular press and academic literature as a negative trait that focuses on personal and selfish results. For the purpose of clarity and as a starting point for the discussion on leadership, the Stogdill and Bass (1990) definition of leadership will be used. “Leadership is an interaction between two or more members of a group that often involves a structuring or re-structuring of the situation and the perception and expectation of the members” (p. 19). This definition of leadership helps to develop the dual understanding of narcissistic leadership presented in this paper.

The framework developed in the Stodgill and Bass (1990) definition suggest that leadership is an interaction. For our study of narcissistic leaders the dynamic interplay – an interaction - of leaders, followers, and the situation should be considered. This allows researchers to explore both the negative consequences and positive challenges of narcissistic leaders. Additionally the situation is an important consideration when discussing narcissistic leaders because of the structuring or re-structuring that occurs. This suggests that influence is an element of leadership when looking at narcissism. The final phrase of perception and expectation ties in with the understanding developed in this paper that leadership is dependent on leaders AND followers through an ongoing, dyadic process.

Narcissistic Leader – Necessary Elements and Assumptions
Labeled under the psychodynamic perspective of leadership, Northouse (2013) offers that this approach rests on the belief that individuals maintain a consistent pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting towards other individuals and the environment (p. 319). The psychodynamic approach suggests that self-awareness of individual personality is a central component. For narcissistic leaders this self-awareness is primarily viewed through leader actions that are “principally motivated by their own egomaniacal needs and beliefs, superseding the needs and interests of the constituents and institutions they lead” (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006, p. 629). Often viewed as selfish and lacking a concern for others, narcissistic leaders behave with a pathological preoccupation with self-fulfillment of individual needs at the expense of others.

**The Greek (Destructive) Perspective of Narcissistic Leaders**

There are a variety of ways that maladaptive and destructive behavior is seen in the narcissistic leader. Narcissistic leadership and the turn towards self is a cornerstone of current understanding. Ouimet (2010) comments that narcissism is “generally defined as the exercise of power for strictly personal and selfish ends” (p. 713). A variety of destructive behaviors exist that stem from the destructive traits of narcissistic leaders: 1) *Self-interested influence* and satisfying personal needs. 2) *Deceptive motivation* includes impulsivity and an inability to learn from mistakes. 3) *Hypersensitivity to criticism*, and 4) *Simulated consideration* which can take the behavioral form of manipulation and exploitation (Ouimet, 2010, p. 717). In an interesting study among narcissism among different occupations, Hill and Yousey (1998) examined the adaptive and maladaptive characteristics of leaders among faculty, clergy, politicians, and librarians. From this quantitative study that the researchers suggests differing levels of narcissism dependent on occupational role. These findings suggests that narcissism has been identified as an individual behavior but it is also possible that a situation (occupation) could also
play a role. The behaviors and occupations identified in these articles provide an understanding of narcissistic leaders that focuses on the Greek (destructive) perspective of the Narcissus myth in which the individual is preoccupied with the self.

Narcissism doesn’t just emerge through leader behaviors but has been identified in the Western culture as a deeper, pathological flaw. “Narcissism most simply means self-love, but is often interpreted as a pathological tendency toward egotistical exploitativeness and grandiose arrogance” (Ghorbani, et al. 2010, p. 136). The pathological development of narcissism stems from the psychological work of Sigmund Freud and is considered a behavioral disorder in the United States. Eight dimensions are outlined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM – 5) handbook when diagnosing a patient. The elements of narcissism include:

1) A grandiose sense of self-importance, 2) overwhelming fantasies of unlimited success, power, beauty or ideal love, 3) a belief that they are special and unique and that they can only be understood by other individuals or institutions of similar superior status; 4) an excessive need for admiration, 5) a sense of entitlement, 6) a propensity to exploit others to achieve their own ends, 7) a lack of empathy towards others, 8) a profound enviousness of others and a belief that others are envious of them, 9) a tendency to show arrogant or haughty attitudes and behaviors (DSM-5, 2013). An interesting consideration is examining narcissistic leaders through a specific situation to determine the productive or destructive action and results.

The Greco-Roman (Constructive) View of Narcissistic Leadership

The subtle shift to the Greco-Roman understanding of Narcissus began in 2000 when Michael Maccoby published Narcissistic Leaders: The Incredible Pros, the Inevitable Cons. The McKinsey Award winning paper of the year suggested that narcissism “can be extraordinarily useful – even necessary” (p. 69). After identification of several high-profile and possible
narcissistic leaders in the modern times he argues that the challenge is to help them not self-destruct or lead the company to disaster. These ideas were further discussed *The Productive Narcissist: The Promise and Peril of Visionary Leadership* (2003). The ideas generated from these foundational texts have helped Ouimet (2010) and Rosenthal & Pittinsky (2006) cautiously engage the Greco-Roman perspective of productive narcissistic leadership. Labeled as “Productive Narcissis” the positive elements center on the ability to create vision and the ability of individuals to behavior with great charisma.

In summary the current stream of literature on narcissism balances heavily on the side that narcissistic leaders are destructive for individuals and organizations. Stemming from the Greek myth of Narcissus and the understanding developed from this perspective, the narcissistic leader is self-focused which eventually lead to destructive consequences. Not only is the evidence displayed in theoretical works but behaviors have been identified in the medical literature as consideration for medical diagnosis. The limited positive elements of narcissistic leaders which stems from the Greco-Roman version of the myth are just beginning to be examined. While these perspectives are helpful and new framework is needed. By thinking about narcissistic leaders as part of a dynamic interplay between leaders, followers, and the situation new questions may emerge that help practitioners and scholars.

**Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation: Ideological Lens**

Introduced by Vernon Robbins in 1984 the term ‘socio-rhetorical’ explains a process of Biblical interpretation. DeSilva (2004) notes this model process is “a model for analysis that encourages interpreters to make use of the full spectrum of established exegetical skill” (p. 24). In his foundational book, Robbins (1996) outlines several strategies to interpret and analyze
scripture. The ideological texture has been selected for this paper because of the ability to examine the text of scripture but also examine the individual and the group (p. 193).

The specific focus of the ideological texture is to develop a “comprehensive patterns of cognitive and moral beliefs about humans, society and the universe that are intended to function in the social order” (p. 193). The exciting and challenging part of ideological texture, and where this stance is dynamically different, is the two way interpretation that can occur. Ideological texture steps out of just interpreting a text but also allows the text to interpret us. “It is at this point that we are most powerfully confronted with the text as Word of God, interpreting us rather than the other way around” (DeSilva, 2004, p. 25). Specifically the following information analyzes the text as it comes from the Bible and it also analyzes the individuals and groups, in this case the individuals of Judas and the Apostle Peter and the group of the twelve disciples.

**The Dynamic Interplay: Leaders, Followers, and Situation**

The next section of this paper discussion seeks to extend the conversation of narcissistic leaders from an evaluation of the good/bad debate to a consideration of the dynamic interplay of leader, follower, and situation through an Ideological examination (Robbins, 1996). As highlighted earlier form the Stodgill and Bass (1990) definition, leadership is a process that is based on interaction of leaders and followers, influenced through a situation that impacts the perception and expectation. Judas and the Apostle Peter are described through a character study, compared among the nine narcissistic traits outlined from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM – 5) handbook, and matched with the Greek and Greco-Roman understanding of narcissism.

**Judas Iscariot – Zealot or Embezzler?**
As one of the twelve original disciples Judas Iscariot is one of the most reviled men in all of history. The surname ‘Iscariot’ seems to suggest that Judas came from Kerioth, which is near Jericho in southern Judea (Jackson, n.d.). As an early disciple and follower of Jesus, Judas appears to willingly accept the call to serve during the three year ministry. Judas was different than the other disciples as the only Judean in the original group of twelve disciples.

Judas led as the money handler and accountant of the early disciples. Serving in this position implies that Judas was trusted by the other disciples. Matthew was a tax collector before coming to Jesus and probably could have handled the money. It is clear that Judas was a covetous man and at times he used his position as the money handler to take from the common funds and provide for himself. This is outlined through the gospel of John to show the ongoing stealing and robbery from Judas during the ministry.

A primary belief continues today that Judas “was a self-serving thief who followed Jesus not because his inner man had converted to him, but because he hoped for personal gain by the relationship” (Bible.org, n.d.). Several authors and two theories seek to understand why Judas betrayed Jesus for the thirty pieces of silver from the chief priests. Judas may have become convinced that Jesus was going to die and not reign as King (Mark 14:3-11) and Judas did it for the money (Matt 26:14-16). It has also been suggested that Judas was a violent Jewish Nationalist who had followed Jesus in hope that through Him his nationalistic flame and dreams might be realized (BibleHub.org).

While the previous description is limited it is possible to compare the personality of Judas with the narcissistic traits outlined in the DSM – 5 handbook. Judas exhibits many of the diagnostic traits of narcissism. These behaviors include:
- A grandiose sense of self-importance and a belief that they are unique and can only be understood by other individuals or institutions of superior status. As the only disciple from Judea, Judas may have felt different or possibly subordinate to the other disciples.

- A propensity to exploit others to achieve their own ends and a lack of empathy towards others is seen through the gospel of John. Judas is seen through this narrative as progressively becoming more and more immoral throughout the ministry. For example in John 12: 5-6 when Mary anoints the feet of Jesus, Judas asks if the money would have been better spent elsewhere. John correctly identifies that Judas wasn’t concerned about the money but that he was not able to steal any additional funds.

- A tendency to show arrogant or haughty attitudes and behaviors. Judas is seen throughout the three years of ministry with Jesus as disregarding the knowledge that his cheating and lying was known to Christ. John identifies early in his gospel that Jesus knew that one of the twelve disciples would betray him (John 6:70). This was repeated throughout the ongoing discipleship until the Passover feast. Jesus proclaimed that Judas was the betrayer when asked directly “Yes, it is you.” (Matthew 26:25).

It appears from this initial examination that Judas displays several traits of narcissism. Judas is a good example of the bad form of narcissistic leaders. Self-love and self-focus seem to emerge throughout the time Judas spent with Jesus Christ and the other disciples until the key moment at the Last Supper and the interaction with Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Peter
The Apostle Peter is one of the most well-known disciples of the Bible. Peter was a fisherman in partnership with James and John when Jesus called him to service. He immediately left everything (Luke 5:11) to follow Christ and was renamed Cephas which means ‘rock’ in Aramaic. Through the Bible when the apostles are names, Peter is always listed first. Peter is one of the inner circle of Jesus Christ and seen most often as the leader of the twelve disciples.

Peter’s personality is most often viewed through these character traits of fisherman and Galilean. As a people group Galileans are described as “fond of innovation and by nature disposed to change” and “ready to follow the leader and to begin an insurrection, quick in temper and given to quarreling” (BibleStudytools.com, n.d.). Throughout the three year ministry with Jesus Christ, Peter is frequently the one disciple who speaks up by asking questions (Matthew 15:15), identifying miracles (Mark 11:21), and proclaiming devotion and confessing that Jesus is the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:16). Peter most famously committed “Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will” (Matthew 26:33). Soon after this rash proclamation, Peter denied he knew Christ three times before the rooster crowed. Peter is primarily described as enthusiastic, strong-willed, and impulsive.

While Peter is certainly one of the most talked about disciples in the Bible not many have considered the narcissistic personality traits of this apostle. Could it be possible that Peter displays narcissistic temperaments? From the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM – 5) handbook, Peter appears to exhibit several narcissistic behaviors including:

1) A grandiose sense of self-importance, 2) overwhelming fantasies of unlimited success, power, beauty or ideal love, 3) a belief that they are special and unique and that they can only be understood by other individuals or institutions of similar superior status; 4) a tendency to show arrogant or haughty attitudes and behaviors. Peter was one of the most devoted followers of
Jesus Christ but he also seems to display narcissistic traits. These characteristics are expressed when Peter sees Jesus walking on the water in Matthew 14: 25-32. In contrast with Judas though these traits appear to stem from a more productive (Greco-Roman) perspective of narcissistic leadership. To further this understanding of the dynamic interplay of leader, follower, and situation two situations will be briefly explored to continue developing an understanding of narcissistic leadership.

**The Last Supper (Matthew 26: 14-16 and 20-25).** As it has been highlighted earlier Judas as a leader and follower of Jesus Christ exhibits several narcissistic personality traits that stem from the destructive (Greco-Roman) perspective. To highlight the dynamic interplay of leader, follower, and situation, the interaction of Judas and Jesus at the Last Supper (Matthew 26) has been selected. The New Testament Gospel of Matthew begins the narrative of the Last Supper with the short picture of Judas approaching the chief priests and asking for an offer. “What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?” The chief priests counted thirty pieces of silver as the scene shifts to the Feast of Unleavened Bread during the Passover. Verse 20 picks up the narrative with Jesus explaining those assembled that he knows he will be betrayed and the person who “dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me” (vs. 23). Judas follows this non-verbal distinction by asking Jesus “Surely not I, Rabbi?” with Jesus answering “Yes, it is you” (vs. 25).

Within the Ideological texture (Robbins, 1996) an understanding of the individuals and groups is an important consideration. It is interesting to note that during the Last Supper and among the group of twelve disciples that Judas is sitting at the premier spot at the table, next to Jesus. While the other disciples were very “sad” and concerned about who was going to betray Jesus (vs. 22), Judas is filled with hubris and asks him directly “Surely, not I, Rabbi” (vs. 25).
The use of the term Rabbi is an interesting manipulative technique used by Judas at this pivotal time. Stemming from the theory that Judas came to the ministry of Jesus and gradually gave in to the temptation, this is the climax of ego and self-focus. Even after multiple proclamations from Jesus that there was a betrayer among the disciples, Judas was so filled with himself that he believed he could continue the seemingly successful manipulation. This understanding was crushed when Jesus answered “Yes, it is you” (vs. 25). It is believed that Judas immediately got up from his seat, sought out the chief priests who had paid him the thirty pieces of silver, and never rejoined the disciples.

The dynamic interplay of leader, follower, and situation for Judas and narcissistic leadership are shown in these verses. The narcissistic leader as seen in the behavior and personality of Judas Iscariot progressively builds until the pivotal moment and separation. Judas not only leads the chief priest to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, but surrenders Jesus to them through a kiss. The destruction of Judas quickly follows and is outlined later in Matthew 27. The Greek version of destructive narcissistic leadership is seen clearly in Judas and the Last Supper.

Walking on Water (Matthew 14: 25-33) - Described in the three biblical narratives found in Matthew (14:22-33), Mark (6:45-52), and John (6:16-21) the story of Peter and Jesus walking on the water follows the feeding of the thousands. The Gospels say that immediately after dinner, Jesus sent the disciples in a fishing boat to cross the Sea of Galilee. Jesus remains on shore to pray alone with the promise that he would join them. Later that night when the boat is at least 3 or 4 miles from shore, the winds and waves begin to pick up and the former fisherman disciples become anxious (Matt 14: 25). With the storm reaching the peak, the disciples see Jesus walking on the water towards the foundering boat with the words “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid” (Matthew 14:27). Peter replies “Lord, if it’s you…tell me to
come to you on the water” (vs. 28). Peter steps out of the boat, walks on the water towards Jesus and becomes afraid. He immediately begins to sink but Jesus reaches out, catches him and says “You of little faith…why did you doubt?” (vs. 31). Peter has been identified earlier in this paper as following the Greco-Roman perspective of narcissistic leadership. The key verse in this story, and the key to productive narcissistic leadership is Matthew 14:33 “Those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God” (NIV). For Peter as a productive narcissist the charisma and vision to change the world is recognized but also firmly channeled in a positive direction.

In Matthew Henry’s commentary about these verses the Lord often lets servants have their choice to show the power and grace of Jesus Christ. “When we look off from Christ, and look at the greatness of opposing difficulties, we shall begin to fall; but when we call to him, he will stretch out his arm, and save us” (para. 3). The narcissistic charisma of Peter and his ability to lead the other disciples is displayed when he steps out of the boat. The grandiose vision of productive narcissism is seen but the challenge of destructive narcissistic leadership is also seen when fear and self-doubt intrude and Peter begins to sink. Biblical commentaries suggest that Jesus is there to rescue and save us when we begin to falter. They key verse in this passage though is that there is a greater vision to behold than those seen on earth. “Truly you are the Son of God” (vs. 33).

In summary an Ideological examination as outlined by Robbins (1996) is helpful to understand how ancient scripture can be understood in modern times. This section has attempted to display a possible direction for the dynamic interplay between leader, follower, and situation through a character examination of Judas at the Last Supper and the Apostle Peter Walking on Water.
Impact of Narcissistic Leadership: Summary and Further Study

It is interesting to think about the comment from Maccoby that “Throughout history, narcissists have always emerged to inspire people and to shape the future” (2000). The introduction of this paper highlighted several individuals who have changed the world through military (Bonaparte), industry (Ford), and technology (Gates). While the individual personalities are important considerations, this paper has tried to highlight the interplay of leader, follower, and situation and how this may impact the positive and negative results of narcissistic leadership. In summary there is learning from this examination and many additional areas to consider within this dynamic framework.

Leaders – Developing Productive Narcissists through Relationship

As the face of organizations, narcissistic leaders seem to display the ideal form of leadership as practiced in Western cultures (Maccoby, 2003). Narcissistic leaders can display charisma that pulls followers towards a powerful cause. Narcissistic leaders can also create a compelling vision that influences individuals, organizations, and communities. With these cautious productive elements, there are many destructive elements that have been explored in the academic literature. From this study both the productive (Greco-Roman) and destructive (Greek) elements of narcissistic leadership have been explored and they can exist within individuals. To help narcissists become productive narcissists the social interaction among individuals is a key element of developing successful leaders. As referenced in Rosenthal and Pittinskuy (2006), Kohut (1977) makes the point that developing healthy self-esteem and diverting from unhealthy narcissism is a key factor. This thought has been emphasized by Ghorbani, et al (2010) and “healthy self-esteem develops out of immature narcissistic potentials through an internalization of nurturing during social relationships” (p. 136).
Moving forward an understanding of the relationships inherent in narcissistic leadership must be considered. Ghorbani (2010) suggests that “relationships with others critically influence a culturally important psychological dimension that ranges from pathological narcissism to mature self-esteem” (p. 137). A dyadic understanding and the specific interplay between leaders and followers is an important consideration. This often is displayed through communication and an interesting area to explore within narcissistic leadership are the productive or destructive communication interaction among leaders and followers.

**Followers – Leading ‘Up’ to Create Vision**

An understanding of followership is an emerging element in the study of leadership. Ouimet (2010) questions how a narcissistic leader can “hold sway” over followers (p. 715). Suggestions that at the beginning of a relationship there are positive elements to consider while the narcissistic relationship quickly deteriorates and feeling of discomfort. Previous studies have suggested that coercion in the leader – follower relationship. This attempt at coercion can been seen by Judas during the Last Supper. Jesus successfully notices the attempt at coercion but does not allow this to detract Jesus from his ultimate purpose on earth.

Ouimet (2010) further suggests that there may be two types of followers in narcissistic relationships: weak followers and those seeking a mutually reinforcing dyad. The first type of follower quickly feeds the narcissistic personality by providing the self-focus, self-esteem, and exploitation typically seen in destructive narcissism. The “weakness of subordinates nourishes the all-powerful feelings of the narcissistic leader” (p. 719). Study about how to encourage those ‘weak’ followers to establish boundaries is important. The second type of follower may be even more destructive for 21st century organizations and communities. The development of a “mutually reinforcing collusion is established between – a mirror-hungry personality” (Ouimet,
2010, p. 719) has been exemplified throughout the late 1990’s with the destruction of several companies in the United States.

**Situation – Recognizing Impact**

The dynamic interplay of leaders, followers, and the situation is the focus of this paper. To continue the study of narcissistic leaders three areas of impact have been suggested as fertile ground for theory and research: culture, environment, and structural (Ouimet, 2010).

*Cultural Impact* – Ouimet (2010) suggests that a focus on narcissism impacts individuals and global cultures. “The more a culture emphasizes individualism, the higher the level of narcissism in its members” (p. 720). In the Western understanding of leadership this will be a concern for the future. From a global perspective how do those cultures typically seen as collective work with and nurture those individuals with narcissistic personality traits? This is an area that will continue to be important in the future.

*Environmental impact* – With the continued fast pace of the world and ongoing change of leadership, a period of severe political, economic or technological instability may result in the emergence of narcissistic leaders. Often the destructive form of narcissistic leadership is displayed with strong rhetoric as the central piece of influence. An understanding of the discourse of the communication involved in leadership and the emergence of narcissistic leadership is an important consideration.

*Structural factors* – Organizational leadership continues to be uniquely positioned to provide structure and oversight of individual behavior and the sharing of information in our organizations and communities. Ouiment (2010) notes that narcissistic leaders are “Firmly convinced that everyone owes them something, narcissistic leaders work relentlessly to expand
their sphere of influence” (p. 721). Productive narcissists and the structure of organizations is an important consideration so that a productive framework for leaders and followers is established.

**Conclusion**

This character examination attempted to highlight “an examination of the dynamics between leaders’ psychological motivations and behaviors and the motivations and behaviors of the constituents and institutions they lead” (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006, p. 630). There is some good in narcissistic leaders - they are able to create great visions and they have the ability to attract followers, but there are also plenty of concerns. An understanding of the productive elements of narcissism and destructive elements of narcissism and better understanding of leadership can be examined.

There is some narcissism in all individuals as we admire our own attributes but the line of destructive narcissism is clearly crossed with an excessive interest in oneself. As individual leaders who may be challenged with narcissism in personal and professional leadership it is important to recognize that narcissistic leadership is a possibility in our modern times and as unique as the individual personality.
References


