

## The darker side of personality

Jones, Benjamin; Woodman, Tim; Barlow, Matthew; Roberts, Ross

### Sport Psychologist

DOI:  
[10.1123/tsp.2016-0007](https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.2016-0007)

Published: 30/06/2017

Peer reviewed version

[Cyswllt i'r cyhoeddiad / Link to publication](#)

*Dyfyniad o'r fersiwn a gyhoeddwyd / Citation for published version (APA):*  
Jones, B., Woodman, T., Barlow, M., & Roberts, R. (2017). The darker side of personality: Narcissism predicts moral disengagement and antisocial behavior in sport. *Sport Psychologist*, 31(2), 109-116. <https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.2016-0007>

#### Hawliau Cyffredinol / General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal ?

#### Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

1 Running head: NARCISSISM AND ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOR

2

3

4

5

6 The darker side of personality: Narcissism predicts moral disengagement and antisocial

7 behavior in sport

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16 Date of resubmission: 05/09/2016

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49

### Abstract

Despite a plethora of research on moral disengagement and antisocial behavior, there is a dearth of literature that explores personality in the context of these undesirable attitudes and behaviors. We provide the first examination of personality, specifically narcissism, as a predictor of moral disengagement and antisocial behavior in sport. Given that narcissism is negatively related to empathy and positively related to feelings of entitlement, it is more likely for narcissists to disengage morally and to behave antisocially. We thus hypothesized that narcissism would predict antisocial behavior via moral disengagement. Across 12 team contact sports ( $n = 272$ ), bootstrapped mediation analyses confirmed this indirect effect, which remained significant when controlling for motivational climate, social desirability, sex and sport type. Coaches and practitioners would do well to consider the darker side of personality in targeting moral disengagement and its behavioral consequences in team sports.

50 The darker side of personality: Narcissism predicts moral disengagement and antisocial  
51 behavior in sport

52 Issues surrounding immorality in sport have been widely discussed (for a review see  
53 Kavussanu, 2008), and researchers have attempted to identify the antecedents that might  
54 underpin any associated antisocial behaviors. Sage, Kavussanu and Duda (2006) described  
55 antisocial behavior as acts with intentions of hurting or disadvantaging another, which are  
56 prevalent in sport and can negatively affect the wellbeing of others. Surreptitiously handling  
57 the ball in soccer to gain an unfair advantage exemplifies an antisocial act in the context of  
58 breaking soccer rules, deceiving the officials, and disadvantaging the opponents, while  
59 simultaneously becoming glorious. Other examples of antisocial behavior in sport include  
60 trying to injure an opponent or deceiving officials by faking injury (Sage et al., 2006).

61 Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986, 1991) offers a process by which individuals  
62 may choose to engage in antisocial behaviors. This theory explains that moral judgement is  
63 linked to moral action via affective self-regulatory mechanisms by which an individual's  
64 ability to distinguish between right and wrong is exercised. Within this self-regulatory  
65 process, individuals are able to monitor their conduct and the conditions under which it  
66 occurs by judging conduct in relation to their moral standards and perceived circumstances.  
67 The consequences that individuals generate for themselves in response to their conduct then  
68 serve as a means of regulating their actions (Bandura, 2002). Such affective mechanisms  
69 encompass self-organization, proactivity, self-reflection, and self-regulation (Bandura, 2002).  
70 These mechanisms provide a process for motivation, along with the psychological regulators  
71 of moral conduct that allow one to engage in moral agency, or perhaps deviate from this  
72 regulation and become morally disengaged (Bandura, 2002).

73 Moral disengagement is a process by which one suspends moral standards in an effort  
74 to reduce negative self-judgment, which one would otherwise experience when violating

75 these standards. Bandura (1991) proposed the selective use of eight psychosocial mechanisms,  
76 collectively known as the mechanisms of moral disengagement, which allow individuals to  
77 transgress without experiencing negative affect (e.g., guilt). The eight mechanisms of moral  
78 disengagement are moral justification, euphemistic labeling, conduct reconstrual,  
79 dehumanization, attribution of blame, non-responsibility, advantageous comparison, and  
80 distortion of consequences (Bandura, 1991). Bandura (1986, 1991) identified moral  
81 disengagement as a process that may positively predict antisocial behavior within individuals.  
82 Boardley and Kavussanu (2008) developed an instrument to measure the eight mechanisms of  
83 moral disengagement in contact team sports, and in line with Bandura's theory (1991), recent  
84 research has revealed that moral disengagement positively predicts antisocial behavior in  
85 sport (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2009, 2011; Hodge & Lonsdale, 2011; Stanger, Kavussanu,  
86 Boardley & Ring, 2013).

87         Although moral disengagement is now a well-established predictor of antisocial  
88 behavior, little research has examined personality variables as predictors of moral behavior in  
89 sport. This gap in the literature is particularly surprising in the context of the competitive  
90 team sport environment, in which there is constant pressure to perform as an individual and  
91 as part of a team. In this environment, individuals may attempt to cheat for the good of the  
92 team (e.g., surreptitiously handling the ball in soccer to gain an advantage) or conversely they  
93 might engage in antisocial acts that compromise a team's climate or chances of success (e.g.,  
94 being sent off in a soccer match for an aggressive act). Researchers have typically  
95 investigated personality and individual differences on specific variables rather than testing  
96 how specific personality traits might differentially relate to undesirable attitudes and  
97 behaviors (see Roberts & Woodman, 2015). Thus, it is perhaps not surprising that few studies  
98 have considered the effects of personality and individual differences when investigating  
99 moral disengagement and antisocial behavior in sport. However, the personality trait of

100 *narcissism* appears to hold much promise in this regard because it seamlessly dovetails the  
101 psychological process of moral disengagement.

102         In clinical settings narcissism is defined as “a pervasive pattern of grandiosity (in  
103 fantasy or behavior), need for admiration, and a lack of empathy” (American Psychiatric  
104 Association, 2013, p. 669). The term narcissism has been extended beyond its pathological  
105 origins to encompass many tendencies among ostensibly normal individuals, and empirical  
106 research on subclinical narcissism has developed considerably since the availability of the  
107 Narcissistic Personality Inventory (e.g., NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1988). Seven subtraits of  
108 subclinical narcissism are identified and explained within the NPI: *authority* - narcissists are  
109 said to enjoy leading and being viewed as authoritarians; *exhibitionism* – narcissists are likely  
110 to engage in extravagant behavior that is intended to attract attention to oneself; *superiority* -  
111 narcissists are known to have an inflated sense of self-worth, indicative of grandiosity; *vanity* -  
112 - narcissists are reported to overestimate their abilities; *exploitativeness* – narcissists exploit  
113 others in order to get what they want, and disregard any potential destruction; *entitlement* –  
114 narcissists demonstrate unreasonable expectancies of others, and favorable treatment or  
115 automatic compliance with their own expectations; *self-sufficiency* – provided that the task at  
116 hand presents an opportunity for glory, it is unlikely that a narcissist will request the aid of  
117 others, and will instead seek to take full credit for themselves.

118         Empirical research on subclinical narcissism has established that narcissistic  
119 individuals think highly of themselves and their abilities, and have unusually high self-  
120 expectations (Farwell & Wohlwend-Lloyd, 1998). The consequence of fulfilling such high  
121 self-expectations may re-enforce narcissists’ belief in their own superiority (cf. Campbell,  
122 Goodie, & Foster, 2004) and increase their tendency to exhibit vanity. These self-  
123 aggrandizing motives may help to provide some preliminary insight into how far narcissists

124 are willing to go in order to attain their goals, and may be fertile terrain for moral  
125 disengagement and subsequent antisocial behavior.

126         The link between narcissism and moral disengagement is all the more likely when  
127 considering narcissists' feelings of self-entitlement (Raskin & Terry, 1988), their pursuit of  
128 personal glory (Roberts & Woodman, 2015) and their attraction to performance motivational  
129 climates (Roberts, Woodman, Lofthouse, & Williams, 2015; Woodman, Roberts, Hardy,  
130 Callow & Rogers, 2011 ). Research has also revealed that performance climates are  
131 positively related to anti-social behavior (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2010; Bortoli, Messina,  
132 Zorba & Robazza, 2012) and that moral disengagement mediates this relationship (Boardley  
133 & Kavussanu, 2010). Consequently, a narcissist's attraction to performance climates may  
134 increase their propensity to subsequently engage in immoral behavior. One might further  
135 expect narcissists' behavior to reflect immoral conduct if it serves to disadvantage those  
136 around them in the process of striving toward personal success, reflecting a degree of  
137 dehumanization. That is, narcissists' egocentric nature, including entitlement, dominance, and  
138 superiority (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001), might prove rather too intra-personally prevalent to  
139 place sufficient importance on attending to morally acceptable social cognitive processes.  
140 Instead, narcissists' egocentric focus may increase the likelihood of justifying thought  
141 process (distortion of consequences) and distorting consequences (conduct reconstrual), thus  
142 increasing the likelihood of moral disengagement. The positive link between narcissism and  
143 moral disengagement is all the more likely, given how narcissists lack empathy for others  
144 (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001), and is emphasized further by the negative link observed between  
145 empathy and moral disengagement in sport (e.g., Shields, Funk & Bredemeier., 2015;  
146 Stanger, Kavussanu, Willoughby & Ring, 2012).

147         Common features across both narcissism and moral disengagement have been  
148 highlighted in the literature, specifically in the form of Machiavellianism, low agreeableness,

149 and psychopathy (Egan, Hughes & Palmer, 2015). Furthermore, Reidy, Zeichner, Foster, and  
150 Martinez (2008) revealed that, in a cohort of university students, narcissism positively  
151 predicted aggression; with entitlement and exploitativeness being the strongest narcissistic  
152 subtrait predictors. Additionally, Reidy et al. (2008) revealed that entitled and exploitative  
153 narcissists are more likely to use aggression more frequently across different interpersonal  
154 contexts, in various forms (e.g., direct, indirect, physical, verbal), and to do so at greater  
155 levels within each of those contexts (Bushman & Anderson, 1998). Given narcissists'  
156 propensity to use aggression across interpersonal contexts, a team sport environment may  
157 provide a fruitful platform for these antisocial behaviors to emerge.

158         In summary, the personality trait of *narcissism* appears predictive of the psychological  
159 process of moral disengagement, which in turn is a key factor in positively predicting  
160 antisocial behavior. Thus, the primary aims of the present study were to assess the  
161 relationship between narcissism and antisocial behavior, and to investigate whether moral  
162 disengagement mediated any such relationship. Consequently, we hypothesized that  
163 narcissism would directly and positively predict antisocial behavior ( $H^1$ ). We also  
164 hypothesized that moral disengagement would mediate the relationship between narcissism  
165 and antisocial behavior ( $H^2$ ).

166         Two additional variables appear particularly worthy of consideration in the present  
167 study: social desirability and motivational climate. First, considering that the etiology of a  
168 narcissist includes a need for admiration, it is likely that narcissists would be more likely to  
169 portray a desired image of the self (i.e., higher social desirability). Conversely, whilst  
170 narcissists lack empathy (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001), it is also possible that narcissists would  
171 be more likely to display lower social desirability. As a result, we deemed it important to  
172 control for social desirability. Second, as researchers have revealed the potential influence of  
173 motivational climate (mastery climate and performance climate) in predicting antisocial



174 behaviors (Bortoli, Messina, Zorba, & Robazza, 2012), we wanted to test the effects of  
175 narcissism whilst controlling for motivational climate. Finally, we conducted a set of  
176 exploratory analyses to explore the potential moderating effect of motivational climate on the  
177 relationships between narcissism and moral disengagement, and narcissism and antisocial  
178 behavior.

## 179 Method

### 180 Participants

181 The sample comprised 272 participants (men = 193; women = 79;  $M_{age} = 22.62$ ;  $SD =$   
182 6.44) from a variety of amateur medium- to high-contact sport teams (American Football,  $n =$   
183 6; Basketball,  $n = 2$ ; Canoe Polo,  $n = 2$ , Gaelic Football,  $n = 6$ ; Handball,  $n = 9$ ; Hockey,  $n =$   
184 27; Lacrosse,  $n = 5$ ; Polocrosse,  $n = 1$ ; Rugby League,  $n = 7$ ; Rugby Union,  $n = 49$ ; Soccer,  $n =$   
185 148; Ultimate,  $n = 10$ ) who reported participating in their chosen sport at least once per  
186 week. Participants were recruited worldwide (e.g., UK, Australia, Canada, USA) via Internet  
187 advertisements that were circulated on social media (e.g., Facebook). We offered the chance  
188 to win £50 (approximately US\$85) on completion of the online inventories as an incentive for  
189 participation.

### 190 Measures

191 **The Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI-16).** The NPI-16 (Ames, Rose, &  
192 Anderson, 2006) is a 16-item measure of narcissism that is based on the 40-item NPI (Raskin  
193 & Terry, 1988). Both measures are designed to assess participants' degree of narcissism as  
194 reflected by a grandiose sense of self, feelings of entitlement, lack of empathy for others, and  
195 an exploitative interpersonal style. Each item contains a narcissistic statement (e.g., *I know*  
196 *that I am good because everybody keeps telling me so*) and a non-narcissistic statement (e.g.,  
197 *When people compliment me I sometimes get embarrassed*) in a forced-choice format,  
198 meaning that participants receive a narcissism score that ranges from 0 to 16. The NPI-16 has

199 good face, internal, discriminant, and predictive validity (Ames et al., 2006) and reliability  
200 (e.g., Gebauer, Sedikides, Verplanken, & Maio, 2012;  $\alpha = .74$ ). The reliability coefficients of  
201 each measure in the present study are presented in Table 1.

202 **Moral Disengagement in Sport Scale-Short (MDSS-S).** The MDSS-S (Boardley &  
203 Kavussanu, 2008) is an eight-item measure of moral disengagement (e.g., Bending the rules  
204 is a way of evening things) and is measured on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1  
205 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*). Each item corresponds to one of the eight  
206 mechanisms of moral disengagement. Boardley and Kavussanu (2008) reported good  
207 construct validity for this short measure of moral disengagement. Recent research has further  
208 supported the reliability of the MDSS-S (e.g., Hodge & Lonsdale, 2011;  $\alpha = .83$ ).

209 **Prosocial and Antisocial Behavior in Sport Scale (PABSS).** The 20-item PABSS  
210 (Kavussanu & Boardley, 2009; Kavussanu, Stanger, & Boardley, 2013) comprises four  
211 subscales: (i) prosocial behavior toward teammates (four items; e.g., *congratulated a*  
212 *teammate/training partner*); (ii) prosocial behavior toward opponents (three items; e.g.,  
213 *helped an injured opponent*); (iii) antisocial behavior toward teammates (five items; e.g.,  
214 *verbally abused a teammate/training partner*) and (iv) antisocial behavior toward opponents  
215 (eight items; e.g., *physically intimidated an opponent*). In line with previous methodological  
216 approaches (e.g., Sagar, Boardley & Kavussanu, 2011), we computed the scores of all items  
217 to produce separate scores for overall prosocial and antisocial behaviors in the present study.  
218 Kavussanu and Boardley (2009) and Kavussanu, Stanger, and Boardley (2013) reported  
219 satisfactory concurrent, discriminant, and convergent validity, and good reliability ( $\alpha$  range =  
220 .68 to .86.) for the PABSS.

221 **Perceived Motivational Climate in Sport Questionnaire-2 (PMCSQ-2).** The  
222 PMCSQ-2 (Newton, Duda, & Yin, 2000) measures the motivational climate within which  
223 participants perceive that they operate and comprises 33 items, 17 of which reflect a mastery

224 climate (e.g., *On this team, players are encouraged to work on their weaknesses*) and 16 of  
225 which reflect a performance climate (e.g., *On this team, only the players with the best `stats`  
226 get praise*). The items are scored on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 5  
227 (*Strongly agree*). Newton et al. reported evidence for good concurrent validity, and Boyd,  
228 Kim, Ensari, and Yin (2014) recently reported good internal reliability ( $\alpha = .86$ ) for the  
229 PMCSQ-2.

230 **Social Desirability Scale (SDS).** The SDS (Form C; Reynolds, 1982) measures an  
231 individual's tendency to act in a social desirable manner and comprises 13 items (e.g., *No  
232 matter who I'm talking to, I'm always a good listener*) on a "true" or "false" forced-choice  
233 format. "True" responses represent the individual's propensity to behave in a sociably  
234 desirable manner. Reynolds reported satisfactory concurrent validity using this short-form  
235 scale. Sârbescu, Costea, and Rusu (2012) also reported good reliability for the SDS ( $\alpha = .75$ ).

## 236 **Procedure**

237 The study received institutional ethics approval. Participants completed the survey  
238 online after social media recruitment adverts had led them to a webpage providing details of  
239 the research, a confidentiality agreement, and a notification that proceeding to the next  
240 webpage was an expression of informed consent to participate. If they chose to continue,  
241 participants provided demographic data before completing the SDS-S, NPI-16, PMCSQ-2,  
242 MDSS-S, and PABSS. The whole procedure took approximately 20 minutes.

## 243 **Results**

### 244 **Preliminary analysis**

245 **Sex Differences.** Previous research has revealed sex differences in the variables under  
246 examination: narcissism (Grijalva et al., 2015), perceived motivational climate (Murcia,  
247 Gimeno & Coll, 2014), moral disengagement (Stanger et al., 2013) and antisocial behavior  
248 (Kavussanu, Stamp, Slade & Ring, 2009). We conducted a MANOVA to ascertain whether

249 there were sex differences for narcissism, moral disengagement, antisocial behavior,  
250 performance climate, mastery climate and social desirability. Results revealed a significant  
251 difference between the sexes,  $F(6, 265) = 23.66, p < .001$ ; Wilks'  $\Lambda = 0.65, \eta_p^2 = .35$ . Follow-  
252 up univariate ANOVAs confirmed that men scored significantly higher than women on  
253 narcissism,  $F(1, 270) = 31.73, p < .001$ ; moral disengagement,  $F(1, 270) = 54.78, p < .001$ ;  
254 antisocial behavior,  $F(1, 270) = 104.71, p < .001$ ; performance climate,  $F(1, 270) = 28.80, p$   
255  $< .001$ ; and social desirability:  $F(1, 270) = 4.10, p = .04$ ; and that women scored significantly  
256 higher than men on mastery climate,  $F(1, 270) = 15.11, p < .001$ .

257 Additionally, because the rules of each sport are different, an individual's propensity  
258 to disengage morally or to partake in antisocial behavior may vary according to sport. As  
259 such, due to this nested nature of team sports, we controlled for sport type in subsequent  
260 analyses. Thus, social desirability, performance climate, mastery climate, sex, and sport were  
261 included as control variables in all subsequent mediation models.

### 262 **Correlational Analysis**

263 We present means and zero-order correlations in Table 1. In support of our theoretical  
264 stance, moral disengagement was positively correlated with antisocial behavior, and  
265 narcissism was positively correlated with both moral disengagement and antisocial behavior.  
266 Additionally, performance climate was positively correlated with narcissism, moral  
267 disengagement and antisocial behavior.

### 268 **Mediation Analyses**

269 We tested the mediating role of moral disengagement in the narcissism and antisocial  
270 behavior relationship, using version 2.10 of the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013) using 5,000  
271 bootstrap samples. We deemed a mediation effect significant if the upper and lower 95%  
272 Confidence Interval limits of the size of the indirect path did not include zero. In support of  
273 our hypotheses, moral disengagement mediated the positive relationship between narcissism

274 and antisocial behavior when measuring the unstandardized indirect effect of narcissism ( $b =$   
275  $.06$ ,  $CI = .01$  to  $.11$ ; see Figure 1) and including social desirability, motivational climate, sex,  
276 and sport as control variables<sup>1</sup>. It should be highlighted that narcissism positively predicted  
277 antisocial behavior for both the teammates ( $b = .10$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and opponents ( $b = .15$ ,  $p <$   
278  $.001$ ) subscales, and was mediated by moral disengagement.

### 279 **Moderation Analyses**

280 In light of the positive relationships observed between performance climate and both  
281 moral disengagement and antisocial behavior, we conducted a series of moderation analyses  
282 to further explore the nature of these relationships. Specifically, we examined the moderating  
283 effect of performance climate on the relationships between narcissism and moral  
284 disengagement, which revealed no significant interaction ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.00$ ,  $F(1, 268) = 0.10$ ,  $p =$   
285  $.75$ , 95%  $CI [-.031, .042]$ ). We also examined this potential moderating effect on the  
286 narcissism and antisocial behavior relationship, which was also not significant ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.01$ ,  
287  $F(1, 268) = 3.51$ ,  $p = .06$ , 95%  $CI [-.084, .002]$ ). Considering that the analysis approached  
288 significance, we examined the simple slopes which revealed that the relationship between  
289 narcissism and antisocial behavior was significant (and positive) at both low and high levels  
290 of performance climate, thus indicating no evidence of moderation. For the sake of  
291 completeness, we also explored the potential moderating effect of mastery climate on the  
292 relationships between narcissism and moral disengagement ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.01$ ,  $F(1, 268) = 2.80$ ,  $p =$   
293  $.10$ , 95%  $CI [-.01, .07]$ ) and between narcissism and antisocial behavior ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.01$ ,  $F(1,$   
294  $268) = 3.50$ ,  $p = .16$ , 95%  $CI [-.01, .07]$ ), which were not significant. In summary for the  
295 moderation analyses, motivational climate did not moderate the relationship between  
296 narcissism and moral disengagement or the relationship between narcissism and antisocial  
297 behavior. Furthermore, a series of moderated mediation analyses (Hayes, 2015) revealed no  
298 moderating effect of performance climate (index of moderated mediation  $.00$ , 95%  $CI [-.02,$

299 .03]) or mastery climate (index of moderated mediation .02, 95% CI [-.01, .05] on the  
300 narcissism-moral disengagement-antisocial behavior relationship.

### 301 **Discussion**

302 The primary goal of the present study was to assess whether narcissism would predict  
303 antisocial behavior and whether moral disengagement would mediate this relationship. This  
304 hypothesis was fully supported and demonstrates that narcissism is a significant personality  
305 predictor of antisocial behavior in sport. The findings were robust to the effects of social  
306 desirability and motivational climate. These data provide the first evidence that personality,  
307 specifically narcissism, predicts moral disengagement and antisocial behavior in sport.

308 The positive link between narcissism and antisocial behavior is theoretically grounded  
309 in the underlying etiology and correlates of these constructs. That is, characteristics such as  
310 manipulation are common across narcissism (e.g., Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001) and antisocial  
311 personality disorder (e.g., Bursten, 1989). For example, narcissists have been shown to relate  
312 to and manipulate people by objectifying them and viewing them for what they can offer  
313 (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Narcissists have also been shown to prioritize their personal  
314 successes in their quest for admiration (Ong, Roberts, Arthur, Woodman, & Akehurst, 2016;  
315 Roberts et al., 2015), similar to the antisocial personality in their disregard for others  
316 (Bursten, 1989).

317 The present research offers a process by which personality (specifically narcissism)  
318 leads to antisocial behaviors. Whilst it is equally possible for individuals to engage in moral  
319 agency, rather than moral disengagement (Bandura, 2002), it is conceivable from the present  
320 findings that narcissists may convince themselves that moral standards do not apply to them  
321 in a sporting context, creating a version of reality in which reprehensible conduct becomes  
322 morally acceptable (Brunell & Gentry, 2008). The findings also fill the void between how  
323 narcissism leads to antisocial behaviour by offering a mechanism to explain this process. That

324 is, narcissists are more likely to disengage morally, rather than to engage in moral agency,  
325 demonstrating precisely how these individuals could consequently behave antisocially.

326         The positive link observed between moral disengagement and antisocial behavior in  
327 the present study is well established both theoretically (Bandura, 1991, 1999) and in the  
328 sporting literature (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2009, 2011; Hodge & Lonsdale, 2011; Stanger et  
329 al., 2013). In recognizing the considerable difficulty of changing one's personality, methods  
330 of reducing moral disengagement and subsequent antisocial behaviors are worth considering.  
331 Moral disengagement functions in the perpetration of inhumanities, including the diffusing or  
332 displacement of responsibility (Bandura, 2002). For this reason, promoting responsibility for  
333 one's actions could serve as a means of reducing the prevalence of moral disengagement, and  
334 may instead promote moral *engagement* and *prosocial* (rather than antisocial) behaviors in  
335 the climates that support staff create within teams (Hodge & Lonsdale, 2011). Specifically,  
336 coaches could promote personal responsibility for individuals' actions during practice and  
337 competition. For example, within a team sport the coach could rotate the role of captain from  
338 game to game, thus increasing responsibility for all individuals and their actions within the  
339 team.

340         When considering the effects of motivational climate, our results concur with  
341 previous findings that suggest that a performance climate is positively associated with moral  
342 disengagement and antisocial behavior in team sports, whereas a mastery climate is  
343 negatively associated with these undesirable attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Bortoli et al.,  
344 2012). Specifically in the present data, there was a positive relationship between performance  
345 climate and moral disengagement and antisocial behavior, and a negative relationship  
346 between mastery climate and moral disengagement and antisocial behavior (see Table 1).  
347 Furthermore, the secondary set of analyses, which examined the potential moderating effect  
348 of motivational climate on the narcissism-moral disengagement-antisocial behavior

349 relationship, revealed no evidence of moderated mediation. There is thus no evidence that the  
350 narcissism-moral disengagement-antisocial behavior relationship is contingent on  
351 motivational climate.

352         Given the cross-sectional design of the present study, a definitive conclusion  
353 regarding the causal nature of the narcissism, moral disengagement, and antisocial behavior  
354 relationship would be premature. However, arguments for an alternative interpretation would  
355 stand on rather less solid theoretical ground. Specifically, such an alternative causal argument  
356 would be that attitudes and behaviors causally influence the formation of stable personality  
357 traits. Additionally, the cognitive process of moral disengagement theoretically precedes the  
358 act of behaving antisocially (Bandura, 1999).

359         Beyond the agentic form of narcissism that we have reported in this study, future  
360 research would benefit from using an additional measure that considers the vulnerable  
361 component of narcissism (e.g., Miller, Gentile, Wilson & Campbell, 2013) alongside the NPI.  
362 Vulnerable narcissists are described as emotionally sensitive individuals who are less prone  
363 to show their feelings (Besser & Priel, 2010). Given this relative lack of expression, one  
364 might argue that they may be less likely to engage in antisocial behavior. Conversely, given  
365 that vulnerable narcissists crave self-pity and are less likely to take responsibility for their  
366 actions (Baskin-Sommers, Krusemark & Ronningstam, 2014), one might argue that they  
367 would be more likely to engage in moral disengagement and subsequent antisocial behavior.  
368 The paradoxical nature of these potential links are fruitful grounds for further investigation  
369 into narcissism in the context of moral behavior in sport. Additionally, this line of research  
370 would also benefit from an exploration of other Big 5 personality variables that might show  
371 further promise in explaining how personality predicts antisocial behavior. Indeed, Big 5  
372 personality traits such as conscientiousness and agreeableness may reveal a mediating or  
373 moderating relationship between narcissism and subsequent behavior. However, researchers



374 who are willing to extend personality research beyond the traditional Big 5 may derive the  
375 greatest insights into the personality types most prone to antisocial behavior in sport. That  
376 said, we maintain that narcissism is likely the most promising personality candidate for  
377 exploring such attitudes and behavior because of the strong theoretical fit between this  
378 personality trait and the darker side of morality.

379 **Conclusion**

380 In summary, we provide the first evidence that narcissism positively predicts  
381 antisocial behavior, and that moral disengagement mediates this relationship. Moral  
382 disengagement remained a significant mediator when controlling for motivational climate,  
383 social desirability, sex and sport. In a sporting context wherein antisocial behavior (e.g., rule  
384 breaking) can adversely impact the offending athlete (e.g., suspensions), the recipient of the  
385 behavior (e.g., injury), the team (e.g., selection issues), and the organization (e.g., fines),  
386 practitioners would do well to develop an awareness of individuals' personality that  
387 underpins their proneness to moral disengagement and subsequent antisocial behavior. This  
388 message is of course equally valid for research as it is for applied practice.

389 **References**

- 390 American Psychiatric Association (2013). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental  
391 disorders (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Text Revision (DSM-IV-TR). Washington, DC: American  
392 Psychiatric Association.
- 393 Ames, D. R., Rose, P., & Anderson, C. P. (2006). The NPI-16 as a short measure of  
394 narcissism. *Journal of Research in Personality, 40*, 440-450.  
395 doi:10.1016/j.jrp.2005.03.002.
- 396 Bandura, A. (1986). From thought to action: Mechanisms of personal agency. *New Zealand*  
397 *Journal of Psychology, 15*, 1-17. doi:10.1111/j.1464-0597.2010.00442.x.
- 398 Bandura, A. (1991). *Social cognitive theory of moral thought and action*. Lawrence Erlbaum  
399 Associates, Inc: Hillsdale, NJ.
- 400 Bandura, A. (2002). Selective moral disengagement in the exercise of moral agency. *Journal*  
401 *of Moral Education, 31*, 101-119. doi:10.1080/0305724022014322.
- 402 Baskin-Sommers, A., Krusemark, E., & Ronningstam, E. (2014). Empathy in narcissistic  
403 personality disorder: From clinical and empirical perspectives. *Personality Disorders:*  
404 *Theory, Research, and Treatment, 5*, 323-333. doi: 10.1037/per0000061
- 405 Besser, A., & Priel, B. (2010). Grandiose narcissism versus vulnerable narcissism in  
406 threatening situations: Emotional reactions to achievement failure and interpersonal  
407 rejection. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 29*, 874-902. doi:  
408 10.1521/jscp.2010.29.8.874
- 409 Boardley, I. D., & Kavussanu, M. (2008). The moral disengagement in sport scale—  
410 short. *Journal of Sports Sciences, 26*, 1507-1517. doi:10.1080/02640410802315054.
- 411 Boardley, I. D., & Kavussanu, M. (2009). The influence of social variables and moral  
412 disengagement on prosocial and antisocial behaviors in field hockey and netball.  
413 *Journal of Sports Sciences, 27*, 843-854. doi:10.1080/02640410902887283.

- 414 Boardley, I. D., & Kavussanu, M. (2010). Effects of goal orientation and perceived value of  
415 toughness on antisocial behavior in soccer: The mediating role of moral  
416 disengagement. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology, 32*, 176-192.
- 417 Boardley, I. D., & Kavussanu, M. (2011). Moral disengagement in sport. *International*  
418 *Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 4*, 93-108.  
419 doi:10.1080/1750984X.2011.570361.
- 420 Bortoli, L., Messina, G., Zorba, M., & Robazza, C. (2012). Contextual and individual  
421 influences on antisocial behavior and psychobiosocial states of youth soccer  
422 players. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 13*, 397-  
423 406. doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2012.01.001.
- 424 Boyd, M., Kim, M., Ensari, N., & Yin, Z. (2014). Perceived motivational team climate in  
425 relation to task and social cohesion among male college athletes. *Journal of Applied*  
426 *Social Psychology, 44*, 115-123. doi:10.1111/jasp.12210.
- 427 Brunell, A., & Gentry, W. (2008). Leader Emergence: The Case of the Narcissistic Leader.  
428 *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 34*, 1063–76.
- 429 Bursten, B. (1989). The relationship between narcissistic and antisocial personalities.  
430 *Psychiatric Clinics of North America, 12*, 571-584.
- 431 Bushman, B. J., & Anderson, C. A. (1998). Methodology in the study of aggression:  
432 Integrating experimental and nonexperimental findings. *Human aggression: Theories,*  
433 *research, and implications for social policy.* Academic Press, San Diego, CA.
- 434 Campbell, W. K., Goodie, A. S., & Foster, J. D. (2004). Narcissism, confidence, and risk  
435 attitude. *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making, 17*, 297–311.
- 436 Egan, V., Hughes, N., & Palmer, E. (2015). Moral Disengagement, the dark triad and  
437 unethical consumer behavior. *Personality and Individual Differences, 76*, 123–128.  
438 doi:10.1016/j.paid.2014.11.054.

- 439 Farwell, L., & Wohlwend-Lloyd, R. (1998). Narcissistic processes: Optimistic expectations,  
440 favorable self-evaluations, and self-enhancing attributions. *Journal of Personality*, *66*,  
441 65-83. doi:10.1111/1467-6494.00003.
- 442 Gebauer, J. E., Sedikides, C., Verplanken, B., & Maio, G. R. (2012). Communal  
443 narcissism. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, *103*, 854-878.  
444 doi:10.1037/a0029629.
- 445 Grijalva, E., Newman, D. A., Tay, L., Donnellan, M. B., Harms, P. D., Robins, R. W., &  
446 Yan, T. (2015). Gender differences in narcissism: A meta-analytic  
447 review. *Psychological Bulletin*, *141*, 261-310. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0038231
- 448 Hayes, A. F. (2013). *Introduction to Mediation, Moderation and Conditional Process*  
449 *Analysis: A Regression-Based Approach*. Guilford Press: New York.
- 450 Hayes, A. F. (2015). An index and test of linear moderated mediation. *Multivariate*  
451 *Behavioral Research*, *50*, 1-22.
- 452 Hodge, K., & Lonsdale, C. (2011). Prosocial and antisocial behavior in sport: The role of  
453 coaching style, autonomous vs. controlled motivation, and moral  
454 disengagement. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, *33*, 527-547.  
455 doi:10.1111%2Fj.1469-7610.2012.02574.x.
- 456 Kavussanu, M. (2008). Moral behavior in sport: A critical review of the  
457 literature. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *1*, 124-138.  
458 doi:10.1080/17509840802277417.
- 459 Kavussanu, M., & Boardley, I. D. (2009). The prosocial and antisocial behavior in sport  
460 scale. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, *31*, 97-117.  
461 doi:10.1080/02640414.2013.775473.

- 462 Kavussanu, M., Stamp, R., Slade, G., & Ring, C. (2009). Observed prosocial and antisocial  
463 behaviors in male and female soccer players. *Journal of Applied Sport*  
464 *Psychology, 21*, 62-76. doi:10.1080/10413200802624292.
- 465 Kavussanu, M., Stanger, N., & Boardley, I. D. (2013). The prosocial and antisocial behavior  
466 in sport scale: Further evidence for construct validity and reliability. *Journal of Sports*  
467 *Sciences, 31*, 1208-1221. doi: 10.1080/02640414.2013.775473.
- 468 Miller, J. D., Gentile, B., Wilson, L., & Campbell, W. K. (2013). Grandiose and vulnerable  
469 narcissism and the DSM-5 pathological personality trait model. *Journal of*  
470 *Personality Assessment, 95*, 284-290. doi:10.1080/00223891.2012.685907.
- 471 Morf, C. C., & Rhodewalt, F. (2001). Unraveling the paradoxes of narcissism: A dynamic  
472 self-regulatory processing model. *Psychological Inquiry, 12*, 177-196.  
473 doi:[http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1204\\_1](http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1204_1)
- 474 Murcia, J. A. M., Gimeno, E. C., & Coll, D. G. (2008). Relationships among goal orientation,  
475 motivational climate and flow in adolescent athletes: Differences by gender. *The*  
476 *Spanish Journal of Psychology, 11*, 181-191. doi:10.1017/S1138741600004224
- 477 Newton, M. L., Duda, J. L., & Yin, Z. (2000). Examination of the psychometric properties of  
478 the Perceived Motivational Climate in Sport Questionnaire-2 in a sample of female  
479 athletes. *Journal of Sport Sciences, 18*, 275-290. doi:10.1080/026404100365018.
- 480 Ong, C. W., Roberts, R., Arthur, C., Woodman, T., & Akehurst, S. (2016). The leader ship is  
481 sinking: A temporal investigation of narcissistic leadership. *Journal of Personality,*  
482 *84*, 237-247. doi:10.1111/jopy.12155
- 483 Raskin, R. N., & Terry, H. (1988). A principal-components analysis of the narcissistic  
484 personality inventory and further evidence of its construct validity. *Journal of*  
485 *Personality & Social Psychology, 54*, 890-902. doi:10.1177/0146167209335461.

- 486 Reidy, D. E., Zeichner, A., Foster, J. D., & Martinez, M. A. (2008). Effects of narcissistic  
487 entitlement and exploitativeness on human physical aggression. *Personality and*  
488 *Individual Differences, 44*, 865–875. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2007.10.015.
- 489 Reynolds, W. M. (1982). Development of reliable and valid short forms of the Marlowe-  
490 Crowne social desirability scale. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 38*, 119-125.  
491 doi:10.1002/1097-4679.
- 492 Roberts, R., & Woodman, T. (2015). Contemporary personality perspectives in sport  
493 psychology. In S. Hanton & S. Mellalieu (Eds.), *Contemporary Advances in Sport*  
494 *Psychology: A Review*. (pp. 1-27). London: Routledge.
- 495 Roberts, R., Woodman, T., Lofthouse, S., & Williams, L. (2015). Not all players are equally  
496 motivated: The role of narcissism. *European Journal of Sport Science, 15*, 1-7.  
497 doi:10.1080/17461391.2014.987324
- 498 Sagar, S. S., Boardley, I. D. and Kavussanu, M. (2011), Fear of failure and student athletes'  
499 interpersonal antisocial behaviour in education and sport. *British Journal of*  
500 *Educational Psychology, 81*, 391–408. doi: 10.1348/2044-8279.002001
- 501 Sage, L., Kavussanu, M., & Duda, J. (2006). Goal orientations and moral identity as  
502 predictors of prosocial and antisocial functioning in male association football  
503 players. *Journal of Sports Sciences, 24*, 455-466. doi:10.1080/02640410500244531.
- 504 Sârbescu, P., Costea, I., & Rusu, S. (2012). Psychometric properties of the Marlowe-Crowne  
505 Social Desirability Scale in a Romanian sample. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral*  
506 *Sciences, 33*, 707-711. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.01.213.
- 507 Shields, D. L., Funk, C. D., & Bredemeier, B. L. (2015). Predictors of moral disengagement  
508 in sport. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology, 37*, 646-658.

- 509 Stanger, N., Kavussanu, M., Boardley, I. D., & Ring, C. (2013). The influence of moral  
510 disengagement and negative emotion on antisocial sport behavior. *Sport, Exercise,  
511 and Performance Psychology, 2*, 117-129. doi:10.1037/a0030585.
- 512 Stanger, N., Kavussanu, M., Willoughby, A., & Ring, C. (2012). Psychophysiological  
513 responses to sport-specific affective pictures: A study of morality and emotion in  
514 athletes. *Psychology of Sport & Exercise, 13*, 840-848.
- 515 Woodman, T., Roberts, R., Hardy, L., Callow, N., & Rogers, C. H. (2011). There is an “I” in  
516 TEAM: Narcissism and social loafing. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 82*,  
517 285-290. doi:10.5641/027013611X13.

518 **Table 1.**

519 Descriptive statistics and two-tailed zero-order Pearson correlation coefficients.

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. Narcissism	(.73)						
2. Moral Disengagement	.19***	(.80)					
3. Antisocial Behavior	.27***	.56***	(.91)				
4. Prosocial Behavior	.17	-.12***	.07	(.76)			
5. Mastery Climate	-.02	-.11*	-.09	.30***	(.93)		
6. Performance Climate	.09	.31***	.20***	-.14**	-.55***	(.89)	
7. Social Desirability	-.25***	-.31***	-.35***	.16***	.15***	-.17***	(.67)
Mean	3.10	3.04	2.37	4.08	3.97	2.52	7.43
(SD)	(3.02)	(1.86)	(1.25)	(0.90)	(0.92)	(1.10)	(2.78)

520 *Note.* Alpha coefficients are on the diagonal in parentheses. Narcissism: NPI-16 on a range of 0-16 (Ames et al., 2006). Moral disengagement: MDSS-S on a range of 1-7  
 521 (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2008). Antisocial behavior: PABSS on a range of 1-5. Pro-social behavior: PABSS on a range of 1-5 (Kavussanu & Boardley, 2009). Mastery  
 522 Climate: PMSCQ-2 on a range of 1-5. Performance climate: PMSCQ-2 on a range of 1-5 (Newton et al., 2000). Social desirability: SDS on a range of 0-13 (Reynolds, 1982).

523 \*  $p < .05$       \*\*  $p < .01$       \*\*\*  $p < .001$



## Footnotes

524 <sup>1</sup> Moral disengagement also mediated the positive relationship between narcissism and  
525 antisocial behavior when no control variables were included in the analysis ( $ab, b = .09, CI =$   
526  $.03$  to  $.17$ ). Furthermore, moral disengagement mediated the positive relationship between  
527 narcissism and antisocial behavior toward teammates ( $ab, b = .06, CI = .13$  to  $.37$ ) and toward  
528 opponents ( $ab, b = .12, CI = .01$  to  $.11$ ) subscales. For the sake of completeness, we also  
529 assessed the mediating effect of moral disengagement on the narcissism - prosocial behavior  
530 relationship; this relationship was not significant ( $CI = -.08$  to  $1.9$ ).