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Any issue that hinders organizational progress is worthy of attention and concern. Researchers have linked the trait of narcissism with leadership and have identified an assortment of senior leader behaviors as representative of narcissism. Some of these behaviors tend to be self-focused but often have the dual benefit of helping the organization reach its objectives. The first question faced by organizations is whether narcissism is a significant component within the personality structure of most senior leaders. If confirmed as such, the institution must then learn how to channel those behaviors toward the benefit of the organization in addition to establishing boundaries that limit any dysfunctional yield. An analysis of the practices and behaviors of 67 CEOs reveals that narcissism is an important characteristic of their personalities. As such, narcissism is something that organizations need to understand since it can expect their senior leaders to rank higher on the narcissistic dimension than most other employees.

NARCISSUS IN THE WORKPLACE: WHAT ORGANIZATIONS NEED TO KNOW

The success and failure of an organization is a direct outcome of a leader's behavior (Carpenter, Geletkanycz, & Sanders, 2004; Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007). Further, a leader's level of intelligence, self-confidence and energy has a positive relationship to organizational outcomes (House & Howell, 1992; Lord, De Vader, & Alliger, 1986). Certain personality structures, such has extraversion, have also been found to bolster the appearance and effectiveness of a leader (Bono & Judge, 2004; Judge & Bono, 2000; Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002). Recently, narcissism has been thought to be included among the personality traits of top leaders (Emmons, 1984; Goveia, 2008; Harrison & Clough, 2006). "The ranks of corporate management undoubtedly consists of a higher percentage of narcissists than we'd find in the broader population" (McFarlin & Sweeney, 2000, p. 29). Researchers have also found a connection between narcissism and leader effectiveness (Blair, Hoffman, & Helland, 2008; M. F. Kets de Vries, 2004). This preliminary investigation explores the degree to which narcissism is prevalent among the CEOs of organizations and how that group compares to the general population.

The concept of narcissism traces to the Greek myth of a boy named Narcissus who was incapable of severing his stare from his own reflection in a pool of water. Narcissism is defined as:

"The essential features are a grandiose sense of self-importance or uniqueness and a preoccupation with fantasies of unlimited success and power; hypersensitivity to criticism; and lack of empathy. Self-esteem, while outwardly appearing high, is actually quite fragile, with a need for constant attention and admiration" (Post, 1993, p. 100).

The leader exposes these characteristics through a number of different behaviors. For example, the narcissistic leader is always on a quest to gain notoriety (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007). The satisfaction of this need can place the organization in "danger" because it brings forth the willingness to take greater

and greater business risks. Risk taking tends to bring consistent attention to the leader, which is an important need for those with the syndrome. In addition, the narcissist not only believes he or she is unique but also protects that image relentlessly. This may lead to a good versus bad (e.g. called splitting) categorization of others, which evolves from a perception of support or lack of support of his or her constructed self-image (Segal, 1997). Anything that violates that image is defended. This is how the fragility, sensitivity and uncaring behaviors evolve.

Many theorists have concluded that narcissism is normal (Kohut, 1986; Kohut & Wolf, 1986; Post, 1993; Ronningstam, 2005) and does not necessarily reach the level of a personality disorder as defined by the DSM IV. "[Narcissism is] frequently encountered in everyday life…[and should be considered] as variants of the normal human personality, with its assets and defects" (Kohut & Wolf, 1986, p. 191). Freud theorized that at birth we are dominated by our narcissism but it is eventually set aside for the purpose of building close relationship with others (Alford, 1988; Gerson, 2000; Kets de Vries & Miller, 1998). However, the loss of one's narcissism may only be partial (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001) leaving some with remnants that can influence behavior in life and work (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1998; M. F. Kets de Vries, 2004; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Work can be the means to satisfy some of these residual needs (Ronningstam, 2005). In fact, organizations provide an excellent climate for the growth and development of narcissistic leaders (Pullen & Rhodes, 2008) and narcissists are likely to emerge as leaders particularly when there is a leadership gap in the organization (Brunell et al., 2008). This can happen because in times of trouble or crisis followers look toward someone, anyone, to help resolve the issue. Senior leaders can easily fill this gap because of their increased need for power and achievement (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). Leaders can use their power for personal gain or for the benefit of the institution they lead (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991); the narcissist commonly favors the former. Research unambiguously connects these power and achievement motives with narcissism (Chessick, 1993; Elliot & Thrash, 2001; Kernberg, 1986; Klein, 1959; Kohut & Wolf, 1986; McClelland & Burnham, 2003; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Rothstein, 1986). If it is true that narcissism is a relevant trait of senior leaders then organizations need to accept and react.

LEADERSHIP AND NARCISSISM

Narcissism and Leadership Theory

Today, full-range leadership (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003; Avolio & Bass, 2004) is a prominent and important leadership theory because it represents the complete spectrum of leader behaviors from avoidant behavior to the more active (Kirkbride, 2006; Pounder, 2008). Three clusters of behavior define this construct: Transactional leadership, Transformational leadership and Laissez faire (Kirkbride, 2006).   The transactional leader uses an exchange approach with followers by offering benefits (e.g. pay) in return for work productivity while maintaining a close watch on performance for purposes of either preemptive or post task correction (Avolio & Bass, 2004). The transformational leader adheres to a more collaborative posture by combining an interest in individual followers with an inspirational message that exemplifies the notion that together leaders and followers can transcend their current shared mental state and make positive changes in the organization (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Transformational leadership is characterized by positive working relationships in that followers are empowered to move forward *with* the leader instead of on *behalf* of the leader (Barling, Christie, & Turner, 2008). That is, the style corresponds to followers' "[lower] levels of obedience, dependence, and job insecurity" (Barling et al., 2008, p. 858). Laissez faire, on the other hand, is a pattern of avoidance and non-leadership. This leader avoids interactions with followers or is passive—the antithesis of leadership (Pounder, 2008). The research also supports the enhancing effect of transformational on transactional leadership (Bass, 1985; Howell & Avolio, 1993).

Both transactional and transformational leadership have been linked to different degrees of narcissism (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1998). When a leader falls prey to their underlying narcissistic tendencies the observer might see behaviors like a fierce reaction to perceived threats, an appearance of uneasiness, Machiavellianism and a self-focused motivation for power and achievement (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1998; Popper, 2002). It is likely that the transformational and narcissism link moves a leader toward what Barling, Christie and Turner (2008) have defined as pseudo-transformational leadership, meaning that the leader uses an inspirational message to satisfy a personal goal instead of the organization's. This leader combines the positive characteristics of the transformational leader with counterproductive behaviors (Barling et al., 2008). For example, the trust commonly found within a transformational leader-follower relationship is replaced with "fear" and the leader's insistence on obedience exacerbates the problem (Barling et al., 2008, p. 854). The narcissistic leader also typically surrounds him or her self with people who will automatically support planned initiatives and any supporting tactics. The narcissistic leader may also ignore opinions and recommendations when making decisions believing instead in his or her superior abilities and intellect. Finally, the narcissistic leader cares very little about others although may feign concern and affection (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1998). Ultimately this leader, unchecked, can be dangerous to followers and the organization he or she leads.

There has been some empirical work investigating the narcissism-charismatic and narcissism-transformational leadership relationships and positive associations have been found (Deluga, 1997; Judge, Lepine, & Rich, 2006; Kets de Vries & Miller, 1998; Padilla, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2007; Popper, 2002; Post, 1993; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). Charismatic leadership is often associated with the inspirational features of transformational leadership and can use narcissism as a mechanism to respond to the presenting environment (L. Foster, 2007). Narcissism has also been associated with leadership in several other important studies. These studies do not support each other but rather present various relational aspects of narcissism and leadership (Blair et al., 2008; Campbell, Goodie, & Foster, 2004; Kets de Vries & Miller, 1998; Khoo & Burch, 2008; O'Connor, Mumford, Clifton, Gessner, & Connelly, 1995; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006).

Blair (2008) reports how common it is for a leader to be considered toxic to followers and that supervisor ratings of interpersonal performance (i.e. relational skills) are negatively related to narcissism. Campbell et al. (2004) revealed the connection between narcissism and overconfidence (i.e. elevated beyond common levels) as well as risk taking behavior. Kets de Vries and Miller (1998) outlined a connection between the level of narcissism and the most common leader styles (i.e. transactional and transformational) and suggested that all leaders were narcissists. Khoo and Burch (2008) found a negative relationship between all the dimensions of transformational leadership (idealized influence attributed and individualized consideration were significant) and narcissism. O'Connor et al. (1995), in a historiometric study, illuminates a connection between personalized charismatic leadership (i.e. focus on self gain versus organizational gain) and the need for power with narcissism. The need for power may explain why the narcissistic leader seeks senior leadership positions. Rosenthal & Pittinsky (2006) reviews the literature on narcissism concluding the discussion is limited and in its infancy. Their work described the range of negative and positive behaviors associated with narcissistic leaders. Pullen & Rhodes (2008) found that manifestation of narcissism in leaders differs depending on whether the leader exhibits a more feminine ("fragile", "passive" and "losing their own voice", p. 12) or masculine (e.g. "aggressiveness", "boastful," etc., p. 11) (Pullen & Rhodes, 2008, p. 11) behavioral orientation. The distinctions will likely increase in relevance as the CEO ranks become more gender balanced.   Finally, Brunell, et al. (2008) found a connection between narcissism and emergence of a leader in three different studies and they also reported that the craving for power may be a primary connector.

The Benefits of Narcissistic Leaders

Some narcissistic behaviors and characteristics are positive. For example, narcissistic leaders can be attractive and fun to be around; they often appear "bigger than life" (e.g. grandiosity) (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). "…An air of supreme confidence and dominance that are the hallmarks of narcissism are in some cases exactly what inspire a group of followers…" (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006, p. 622). They are often considered eloquent (Harrison & Clough, 2006). This pattern helps them secure a leader position and maintain that position (Lubit, 2002). In fact some of the more prominent business leaders, like Jack Welch and Steve Jobs, have been defined as narcissistic and at the same time are considered exceptional leaders (Downs, 1997; Duchon & Burns, 2008; Maccoby, 2000). At the organizational level, The Liz Claiborne organization provides a good case study. It has channeled its narcissistic tendencies toward productivity, and has inculcated a culturally shared understanding that success is not an entitlement (Duchon & Burns, 2008); an attitude of entitlement is common among narcissists. Claiborne steadfastly insists on maintaining reality-based awareness about its strengths and weaknesses as an organization along with requiring accountability from its members' successes and failures. Simultaneously the culture also values and protects individuality at the same time as promoting the work of teams. Together, these and other characteristics prevented the organization from falling victim to extreme narcissistic tendencies that are apt to blind organizations rather than support performance (Duchon & Burns, 2008).

Leader narcissists also tend to be great visionaries (Blair et al., 2008; Maccoby, 2000) and communicators (Maccoby, 2000), skills that make leaders successful. Further, narcissists use humor (Kohut, 1986) sometimes elevating them to the life of the party (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). In addition, one can readily observe the narcissist's self-confidence (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007). However, the projection of confidence usually hides a low self-esteem (Post, 1993). Indeed, the "faking" of self-confidence leads to further trouble whereby the narcissistic leader may eventually believe in his or her own message of invulnerability (Campbell et al., 2004); feelings of invulnerability can lead to risky decisions and behaviors (discussed later).

Many studies have also found a linkage with achievement and power needs (Brunell et al., 2008; Chessick, 1993; Kernberg, 1986; Klein, 1959; Kohut & Wolf, 1986; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Paunonen, Lonnqvist, Verkasalo, Leikas, & Nissinen, 2006; Rothstein, 1986). Without these needs coupled with a motivation to lead (Hughes, Ginnett, & Curphy, 2009; Yukl, 2002), few senior leaders would have reached their level of success. Recently researchers have begun to recognize that narcissistic leaders can exhibit positive characteristics (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007; Paunonen, Lonnqvist, Verkasalo, Leikas, & Nissinen, 2006; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006) even when acknowledging its negative features which will discussed more fully below. . "Talented narcissistic people possessing intellectual giftedness combined with grandiose fantasies and strong self investment can experience sustained periods of successful academic, professional or creative accomplishments" (Godkin & Allcorn, 2009, p. 46). Leaders with a healthy dose of narcissism also have been identified as capable change advocates (Pullen & Rhodes, 2008). Narcissism is also positively related to individual creativity (Raskin & Hall, 1981) a characteristic important to successful leaders.

The research on narcissism has evolved. While there is no clear quantitative boundary the literature presents a qualitative separation between the good versus bad narcissism. For example, productive narcissism (a restrained narcissist that avoids the extreme characteristics) is thought to be acceptable or healthy and characteristic of many successful leaders (Harrison & Clough, 2006; Maccoby, 2003).

The Negative Aspects of Narcissistic Leaders

Researchers have categorized the narcissist leader as either "destructive" (depreciation of others to elevate self) or "reparative" (elevating followers to gain support and admiration) (Volkan, 1980, pp. 138-139). While narcissism can have many positives, the generalized belief and bias is that all narcissism is negative and will overpower any positive characteristics. At the organizational level, studies continue to focus mostly on the negative consequences of leader narcissism. For example, King III (2007) proposes that leader narcissists will be ineffective at all stages of a developing crisis (e.g. prevention, reaction and recovery) because narcissistic structures get in the way of the necessary behaviors at such a difficult time. Kets de Vries (2004) adds that narcissistic behaviors often emanate out of the individual's subconscious making it more difficult to self-regulate. Kellerman (2004) describes several cases where leaders were given free reign and how that freedom led to bribery and other atrocities (e.g. Samaranch's leadership of the International Olympic Commitment). Therefore, when the organization's "governors" do not pay attention, leaving the leaders unchecked, narcissism can have a greater influence on organizational outcomes. That is, unrestrained narcissism can influence decisions in "strategy, structure and staffing" (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007, p. 352), lessen effective communications (Adubato, 2009) and   interfere with organizational learning (Godkin & Allcorn, 2009).

Organizations as an entity can also take on the characteristics and neuroticism of their leader (M. Kets de Vries, 2004); that is, the leader can broadcast his or her narcissism into the structures of the business, leading to a diminished capacity to learn and grow (Godkin & Allcorn, 2009). Duchon and Burns (2008) describe how an organization can also become narcissistic (see Duchon & Burns, 2008) and its evolution is often an outcome of the leader's behavior (e.g. CEO Ken Lay of Enron). Therefore, for obvious reasons, if narcissism is prevalent among senior leaders an understanding of its characteristics is highly recommended (Post, 1993) so that appropriate action can be initiated.

At the individual and group level, narcissists exhibit behaviors that stand out. One observable characteristic is that the narcissist is continually in the hunt for admiration and confirmation (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007). This is an obsessive behavior whereby his or her attention is toward the acquisition of praise from those of importance. In addition, the narcissist unwittingly takes action to keep the receipts of praise flowing in his/her direction. This can translate into behavioral aberrations such as a willingness to take high risks as a means to remain the center of attention. After a completion of one accomplishment, the narcissistic leader tends to seek the next bigger, better and more praiseworthy success. At times the behavior can mirror that of an addiction. In American organizations the narcissist fits in very well given the business obsession with quarterly gains (Vazire & Funder, 2006). Often this focus comes at the expense of long-term organizational needs. He or she can also push followers to the brink leaving behind burned out staff-members (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). One behavior that has vast implications is the concept of splitting. Splitting, a theory developed by Melanie Klein, is the tendency to define everyone as part of an in-group (good) versus that of an out-group (bad) (Segal, 1997), which is sometimes explicated as "you are either for me or against me". The narcissist tends to shun those in the out-group and magnetically draws in those from the in-group. There is a link between this concept and Leader Member Exchange Theory (LMX). LMX suggests the lower quality relationship between the leader and follower in the out-group may create an incentive for the worker to leave the organization (Bhal & Gulati, 2008; Gerstner & Day, 1997; Tse & Lam, 2008) suggesting a negative relationship between retention and leader narcissism. Splitting also can create the conditions for the Abilene Paradox, whereby out-group followers hold back from expressing their views and adopt positions that maintain unit harmony (Harvey, 1988). Restrictive environments like this also squelch follower creativity and promote compliance behaviors over that of commitment, resulting in a reduction of citizenship behaviors (e.g. willingness to go beyond the minimal requirements of a position) (Sun, Aryee, & Law, 2007). .

The narcissistic leader will also tend to discount feedback that challenges his or her ordered system of beliefs (Vazire & Funder, 2006). This is why an organization must deliberately erect boundaries to channel these behaviors. Even when fully accountable for events the narcissistic leader is a master at deflecting blame (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006; Vazire & Funder, 2006). Further, the narcissist's behavior sometimes has interesting nuances in that the narcissist seeks relationships while simultaneously maintains arms length distance (Bacal & Newman, 1990). The main reason he or she wants relationships is to secure the admiration of others. Contrary to what is seen on the surface as a friendly, engaging and optimistic leader, he or she actually may have an underlying icy and distant demeanor (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006).

Finally, as articulated clearly by Kellerman (2004) bad leadership behavior is never conducted in a vacuum. Instead, followers also have a say in their willingness to follow (Hollander, 1997). The narcissist often draws followers into their web. Kohut & Wolf (1986) describe the concept of *mirror-hungry personalities* and *ideal-hungry personalities* with the follower and leader looking to the other for support and admiration. The symbiotic leader-follower relationship becomes a crutch for the narcissistic leader and its strength ebbs and flows with the level of admiration and accolades received (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007; Kohut & Wolf, 1986). Blair et al.'s (2008) results suggest that followers seem to buy-in to their narcissistic leader's drama. For example, Enron's employees took on the belief system of their leaders (Duchon & Burns, 2008).

To summarize, narcissistic leaders have bad and good qualities. The organization and its constituents are drawn to the narcissistic leader because of the potential performance upside (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007). However, the negative characteristics can derail the leader, the organization and its followers (Maccoby, 2000) if not restrained in some way. The question is how prevalent is this personality feature among senior leaders? As will be discussed below more fully and is the central theme of this paper, the narcissism trait is prevalent among senior organizational leaders and thus organizational governance must include some kind of preemptive action. That is, if the premise is accurate it places narcissism among a variety of issues that organizational boards and stockholders need to monitor and manage.

LINKING NARCISSISM TO CEOS

Few investigations have looked directly at CEOs and their narcissistic traits (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007). While much has been written about narcissism among senior leaders no studies that I am aware of have actually confirmed its prevalence or compared how CEO leaders rank within the standard population. One likely reason is access. Organizations and their membership naturally resist being measured for narcissism. In addition, it is difficult to look across a large population of subjects. Thus, this preliminary investigation utilized an approach recommended by Bass, Avolio & Goodheim (1987) and studied the leaders behaviors, actions and characteristics through written biographical accounts. The method is called historiometry and was popularized by Woods in 1909 (Simonton, 1990). Historiometry is a quantitative analysis of information contained in written records (Simonton, 1986) and is designed to understand macro level phenomena. This investigation looks across a sample of leaders to determine overall levels of narcissism in the group as a whole (macro) and does not focus on a specific leader (micro). The approach asks rater participants to read written biographical accounts and then answer questions about the subject. The method has been used across an assortment of study topics including research on achievement, personality, motivation, politics and experiments (Simonton, 1986). Bass, Avolio and Goodheim (1987) studied the historiometric method and found it to be a reliable and

valid way to investigate leadership; they also confirmed the use of an undergraduate student population as raters.

In the present investigation 283 graduate and undergraduate students read 67 behavioral profiles of corporate CEOs. The students did not know the identity of the leaders, the objectives of the investigation, or that a narcissism scale was being used. The student raters simply read the profiles and then answered survey questions based on the information contained in the written account. Five to nine questionnaires, from different raters, were completed for each leader. The goal was to obtain at least three questionnaires for each leader to enable the calculation of interrater reliability statistics. Beyond obtaining the three, I collected as many as questionnaires as possible for each leader. The leader profiles were created from articles published in three well-known national business publications. As is standard in this type of investigation the profiles approximated 600 to 800 (Bass et al., 1987; Deluga, 1997, 2001) words and all verbatim statements (e.g. 'Tough, tireless, coolly rational' 'ability to relax people') describing a leader's behavior, actions and characteristics were extracted to form the profile. The statements were not edited other than to remove identifying information or information about the business being managed. Appendix A contains a sample profile.

Each of the 67 CEOs included in the study was in the senior position within 59 organizations. Four of the leader subjects were women. The leader group approximated 41% (67 out of approximately 160) of all leaders who led the 59 organizations from 3/1/1986 to 3/1/2006.

MEASURE

The measure for narcissism was the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI). The NPI is a 40-item, forced choice instrument developed by Raskin and Hall in 1979, and validated by the authors and independent researchers (Deluga, 1997; Raskin & Terry, 1988). Raskin & Terry (1988) confirmed seven dimensions of narcissism with the NPI and its use in measuring narcissism among non-clinical or healthy populations (Raskin & Terry, 1988, pp., p. 894): (1) *Authority* (8 items) ("I see myself as a good leader"), (2) *Self-Sufficiency* (6 items) ("I rarely depend on anyone else to get things done"), (3) *Superiority* (5 items) ("I am an extraordinary person"), (4) *Exhibitionism* (7 items) ("I am apt to show off, if I get a chance"), (5) *Exploitativeness* (5 items) ("I find it easy to manipulate people"), (6) *Vanity* (3 items) ("I like to look at my body") and (7) *Entitlement* (6 items) ("I will never be satisfied until I get all that I deserve"). The instrument was adjusted from a self-report to an observer report format. Two pilot studies, which followed the same approach as the primary study, confirmed there was no statistical difference between the different questionnaires. The scores of the different scales were aggregated for a total narcissism score. The pilot studies also compared graduate and undergraduate responses and found no statistical difference between the groups confirming Bass et al.'s findings (Bass et al., 1987) that undergraduates are viable raters.

RESULTS

Using methods informed by Shrout and Fleiss (1979) the rater reliability, ICC (1, k), was assessed for the NPI instrument. The ICC calculation for the NPI was .853 well above the .70 recommended benchmark. Table 1 details the results.

TABLE I
MEAN, STANDARD DEVIATION AND RATER RELIABILITY

Variable	# Items	N	Mean	Score Range	Std Dev	α	ICC
Narcissism (NPI)	40	505 questionnaires 67 CEOs	23.62	2 - 40	9.56	.92	.853

The investigation obtained 505 questionnaires on 67 CEOs based on the profiles. The results showed an NPI mean score of 23.62, SD 9.56, and Cronbach's alpha of .92.

Levels of Narcissism

The resulting scores reveal that overall the 67 CEO leaders have high levels of narcissism. However, the literature does not identify a quantitative benchmark score as a higher level of narcissism versus a lower level. Without this cutoff other comparisons are necessary to make the attribution.

The overall premise and concern of this paper is that higher levels of narcissism exist in the upper ranks of organizations and therefore it is important for the stakeholders in organizations to understand and react to the affliction. To provide some guidance as to whether this is an accurate assessment I compared this study's results to that of other studies. First, I looked at studies that used a more general population as participants, which I believe offers a good comparison to the CEO group for this specific investigation. Then I looked at several studies that might be considered benchmark or normative, however, these studies exclusively used college students for participants.

I began with a review of 198 studies on narcissism that were conducted from 1968 to 2008. I eliminated 164 studies that did not use the NPI, use the same 40-item scale, include the mean scores or provide accessible information. I then eliminated 16 studies that used undergraduate college students as participants because the benchmark and normative studies described later used a large college student population. I then aggregated the results of the remaining 18 studies. The mean NPI scores ranged from 10.69 to 28.12. Only one study exceeded the CEO group's NPI score of 23.62. This study (M = 28.12) investigated weightlifters and their steroid use and the sample size was relatively small (n = 36).

The weighted mean NPI score for the above 18 studies combined was 15.3 from 9673 participants, which is lower than the 23.62 mean from the present CEO group. The comparative studies used participants that included celebrities, different residential communities, parents, juvenile offenders, and sportsmen. No comparative study appeared to use CEO leaders as subjects but there is the possibility that some participants were senior leaders. One study had 3445 participants ranging in ages from 8 to 83. The study contained participants from around the world although most were from the U.S. This study found a mean NPI score of 15.2, SD 6.7 (J. D. Foster, Campbell, & Twenge, 2003). This study revealed that narcissism tends to be higher among the young population (< age 15, M ~ 18) with the lowest level at the ages of 50 – 54 (M ~ 11). Those above 59 had a mean score of ~ 12.5. Another study seems to offer the best comparison to the CEO group (J. Foster, D. & Campbell, 2007). The reasons are as follows: The study (1) contained the largest participant group reviewed, (2) participants were from across the general population (some students may have been included) among a wide age group (17 – 70), and (3) it is a recent study. One negative to using it as a comparison group was that its participant group was 75% female (male and female scores were not reported) which could skew the results. This study included

3895 participants. It revealed a mean NPI score of 15.63, SD of 6.77. A statistical test confirmed this group was statistically different (lower) than the CEO group in the present investigation (t = 23.64, p < .05, d.f. 4398). To summarize, these studies from the general population in comparison to the CEO group suggest that CEOs are higher in narcissism.

In addition, to the previous studies described I looked at three additional studies that might be considered benchmark or normative. The first was the Raskin and Terry (1988) analysis conducted on the NPI instrument. This study validated the 40-item instrument using a principal components analysis. They looked at 1018 college students finding a mean NPI score of 15.55 (SD = 6.66). A more recent study looking at 10,491 college students over a period from 1996 and 2002 to 2007, found a mean score of 15.23 (SD not reported) (Trzesniewski, Donnellan, & Robins, 2008). Finally, a meta-analysis looked at a change in the Narcissistic Personality Inventory scores of 16,475 U.S. college students from studies conducted between 1979 and 2006 (Twenge, Konrath, Foster, Campbell, & Bushman, 2008). Over that time period, the mean scores increased from 15.06 to 17.29 with an averaged SD of 6.86. No single study exceeded a mean score of 21.54. Statistically this latter group (M = 17.29) was significantly different (lower) than the current CEO group (t = 20.145, p < .05, d.f. 16,978)

Based on these results, there is evidence that overall the 67 CEOs investigated demonstrated a higher level of narcissism than is commonly found among different participant groups in the general population. If this pattern holds true for the population of senior organizational leaders and CEOs then organizations need to be aware.

LIMITATIONS

Since this preliminary review was not a randomized sample, it cannot be generalized to a larger population. While Historiometry is a valid method to investigate leaders (see Bass, Avolio and Goodheim, 1987) the data is still gathered through written accounts of their actions and behaviors, (secondary sources) which may confound the results. Some might challenge this approach as more of a measure of implicit leadership theory. That idea might have merit because the raters could have an implicit expectation regarding the behaviors of a CEO group (Offermann, Kennedy Jr., & Wirtz, 1994) and their level of narcissism. One argument against that premise is that the raters were not aware they were rating narcissism. There are also outside resources that confirmed what was found. For example, Jack Welch was found to be higher on the narcissism scale (Arvisais, 2007) and several outside resources have identified him as a narcissist (Maccoby, 2000). In addition, the NPI scores for the CEO group ranged from 2 – 40 indicating that the raters were able to distinguish and separate the recounted behaviors from one leader to another. Nevertheless, more investigation is needed.

Another limitation could be the bias towards describing narcissism in more masculine terms (Pullen & Rhodes, 2008). The NPI instrument explores narcissism from a masculine angle favoring variables like exploitation, superiority and exhibitionism (Raskin & Terry, 1988) instead of the more feminine "servant" or "victim" (Pullen & Rhodes, 2008, p. 22). This could render the ability to detect narcissism more difficult among women or men if their leadership style tended toward a more feminine orientation. Four of the CEOs within the present investigation were women with mean scores falling as low as 10 to as high as 30 (i.e. 10, 19.33, 24.37, 30.20). Interpretations of these numbers are more difficult, since measures are not focused on feminine narcissistic behaviors. This is also something for future research. Finally, the behaviors described in the leader profiles could also be representative of a different pathology and or could be a temperament that appears narcissistic. Future research needs to get a closer look at the degree to which this phenomenon exists.

The current result supports the claim that narcissism is stronger in a CEO population as compared to the general population and supports Kets de Vries' (2004) argument that all leaders are highly narcissistic.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR HRD

The implication of this finding is very important for organizations. As articulated by Kellerman (2004) when organizations fail to establish controls, leaders can go astray and outcomes can suffer. Rosenthal and Pattinsky (2006) also confirmed that the negative narcissistic characteristics are something to be avoided and can cause lower performance (Campbell et al., 2004). If additional future investigations support this investigation's premise, then the need to understand narcissism along with its corresponding behaviors is important (Blair et al., 2008; Post, 1993). Ultimately, the endgame for the organization becomes the capturing of the positive behaviors from the narcissistic leader (e.g. achievement motivation, charm, willingness to take acceptable risks (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007) whilst protecting against the negative (Downs, 1997).

Knowing that narcissism commonly exists should also lead toward the permanent placement of organizational level policies and procedures that can serve as checks and balances within the structures of the organization. These boundaries can take on many forms including the use of outside directors, separation of the Chairman and CEO positions, committees that are more involved in the day-to-day affairs of the organization and so forth. Even regular leader audits might provide an ongoing stream of feedback that can help check the leader (King III, 2007). Finally, the culture of the organization needs to be examined. Some institutional cultures will not tolerate narcissism (King III, 2007; Lubit, 2002). On the other hand, if the organization is tolerant of this kind of behavior then maybe a cultural change process should be implemented.

At the individual level, keep in mind that narcissism has a stealth component. That is, the narcissistic leader is likely to rise very fast and be very attractive to the organization due to his or her potential for improving performance. Eventually, however, the leader falls from grace (Brunell et al., 2008; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). The board can assist by establishing a coaching mechanism for senior leaders along with a self-awareness intervention (Blair et al., 2008; M. Kets de Vries, 2004; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). The board can also install a confidant for the leader (King III, 2007). The confidant can be a sounding board and also guide the leader when it appears behavior will deviate from what is known to be effective. Training on narcissism that offers alternative constructive behaviors (e.g. training on transformational leadership behaviors) is another course of action (Ling, Simsek, Lubatkin, Lyon, & Veiga, 2008). Additionally, narcissists need team training since they often find team settings a struggle (Lubit, 2002).

The composition of narcissism within the personality of the individual is stable, however, specific circumstances, such as a crisis, may draw out one's latent narcissism. The organization needs to understand what can exacerbate these tendencies and avoid these situations. For example excessively high bonuses symbolize high praise for those in charge and can activate one's narcissistic leanings.

There is one suggestion that is *not recommended* and that is attempting to prevent narcissists from being hired in the first place; this is an exercise in futility. The reason is that there is ample theoretical and growing empirical evidence that all leaders exhibit higher-levels of narcissism (Kets de Vries, In Giampetro-Meyer, S.J., Browne, & Kubasek, 1998; Harrison & Clough, 2006) and this investigation supports that premise. The strongly narcissistic individual is also likely to easily pass muster during the

interview process "as a result of their outward confidence, willingness to distort history, and glibness that enables them to convincingly claim accomplishments they do not have" (Lubit, 2002, p. 134). If true then it would be very difficult for the organization to exclude those with the affliction from being hired. This strategy can also prevent the hiring of some very effective leaders (e.g. like Jack Welch). Thus, the key is not in the prevention of hiring a narcissist, but instead to recognize its existence and place barriers against potential negative behaviors so as to prevent any destructiveness.

To summarize, narcissism exists in all of us and senior leaders seem to be higher than those in the general population. As such, organizations must acknowledge its existence and take preemptive action as described earlier.

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APPENDIX A - SAMPLE PROFILE USED IN THE INVESTIGATION

*Leader: Robert 0508A**

'Robert [is] a Wall Street operator with a long history of minting money in the…business'
'Robert seems to have a knack for selling just when markets are at their peak, which has given some buyers severe indigestion.'
'Robert is at it again, pulling together another … empire, which-though Robert won't acknowledge that he has an endgame in mind-he'll ultimately look to sell for another big score'.
'These are Robert's strengths: identifying trends in the…business before others, then gathering and deploying capital to make the strategy work. "Robert is like a Clint Eastwood character in an old Western movie," says….a business associate of Robert. "He rides into town and leaves with all the money and the women. He made a lot of people wealthy, and he made himself even wealthier."'
'Visit with Robert for an hour or two in his…office, and you are likely to get a rapid-fire discourse on politics from the 1960s to today, or rock & roll radio, or Thoreau, or education in America, or all of the above.'
'You may find him a bit quirky. He loves to party. He's been known to sneak up on people and scare them. And there are a couple of Robert stories that involve nudity.'
'"Robert is very exhausting to be with. He has unbounded energy when it comes to business. He can outlast and outtalk anybody." Says a close colleague: "His BlackBerry messages start at 6 A.M. and never stop into the night. I should get [him] a waterproof one for the shower."'
'"He's obviously smart, and he doesn't B.S. around."'
'What kind of person would grow up to have business dreams like these? On Wall Street they like to say Robert hardly knows failure, but he saw it firsthand growing up….")I suppose of you ere a psychiatrist you could say I wanted to do well, where my father had had a lack of success," Robert says.'
'Robert graduated magna cum laude…in 1969 after becoming immersed in counterculture politics and rock & roll. He set up his own business'
'"Robert can sell igloos," says … "Robert can sell anything-it doesn't matter-he has that kind of head."'
'Once [he] had a beef with [a] late night [employee]…."The guy didn't have any energy," says Robert…."I thought he was asleep. The [room]…had a glass wall. So in the middle of one night, Robert and I took off all of our clothes and ran back and forth in front of the glass naked. We cured him."'
'Robert was known for pushing the envelope. At various points heated negotiations and lawsuits ensued between Robert and [a seller]…who alleged that Robert was trying to shortchange investors.'
'To Robert the soft patch was an opportunity to reload.'
'"He's a very smart guy, but I don't think you want to be sitting on the other side of the negotiating table from him."'
'By then Robert was already toiling away on his next project'
'Robert was looking to become the single big fish in this business.'
'Several managers…bristled over having to negotiate with such a corporate gorilla.'
'Robert insists that cancer hasn't impeded his business or his social life, which can be a bit wild and woolly.'
'"He likes to jump out of the bushes or hide in hotel rooms and scare people," says … "He's like a little boy."'
'While some might find that a 25th wedding anniversary is best celebrated privately, Robert held his at the Manhattan rock hall Irving Plaza with hundreds of guests.'
'Lately Robert has become more guarded, though. And don't even think about asking him what his middle initials…stand for. "I've tried to get him drunk to get him to tell me," says …. "Didn't work." Okay, so come on, Robert what does …stand for? "I could tell you, but I'd have to kill you," he says.'
'How big will [it]… become? As big as Robert's ambitions, perhaps.'
'Which suggests that Robert is either very confident in his ability to create more value with these … companies, or believes he can sell them to someone who has even more confidence, or both.'

*Excerpts are direct quotes from different portions of one or more previously published articles in one or more business magazines. All articles are available to the general public. Duplication without permission is prohibited. Contact the study's author to identify the source (s).