

## **ABSTRACT**

OLLS, COURTNEY WILLIAMS. Relations Among Leader Personality Traits and Subordinates' Perceptions of Destructive Leadership. (Under the direction of Dr. S. Bartholomew Craig.)

Research examining the relations among personality traits and leadership has primarily focused on the “bright” side of leadership (Craig & Kaiser, 2012), with relatively little attention given to relations among personality traits and destructive leadership. This study examined relations among leader personality traits (narcissism, Machiavellianism, and the Big Five factors of personality) and subordinate perceptions of destructive leadership. Data from 135 leaders and 242 subordinate employees were collected. Regression analyses revealed that both low-agreeableness and high-agreeableness leaders tended to be rated as more destructive, while leaders high in Machiavellianism tended to receive higher managerial ineffectiveness ratings. Contrary to expectations, both low and high levels of leader emotional stability were associated with lower interpersonal harshness ratings. Leader narcissism, extraversion, openness, and conscientiousness were not related to subordinate perceptions of destructive leadership. These findings suggest that all personality types are likely to be found among destructive leaders. Furthermore, given the pattern of observed relationships in light of previous research on personality and leadership effectiveness, these findings are consistent with the idea that destructive leadership and (in)effective leadership are two distinct constructs.

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Relations Among Leader Personality Traits and Subordinates' Perceptions of  
Destructive Leadership

by  
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**DEDICATION**

This is dedicated to my family. Your love, support, and encouragement means more to me than you could ever know.

## **BIOGRAPHY**

Courtney Williams Olls was born in 1983 in Washington, DC. After graduating from the Holton-Arms School in Bethesda, Maryland, she received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from the University of Virginia in 2006. Courtney spent the next four years working in clinical trials research – first at Massachusetts General Hospital and then at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She began her graduate education in the Industrial/Organizational Psychology Doctoral Program at North Carolina State University in the fall of 2010. Courtney has been employed as a graduate teaching assistant in the psychology department and as a research analyst at GlaxoSmithKline in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina.

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## Relations Among Leader Personality Traits and Subordinates' Perceptions of Destructive Leadership

Leaders occupy a central role in organizations, and as such, the study of leadership is a critical part of understanding organizational performance. In the current context, leadership is defined as a process that takes place within organizations, where organizations are conceptualized as systematic structures that exist to organize and direct collective effort (Craig & Kaiser, 2012; Kaiser, Hogan, & Craig, 2008).

### **Defining Leadership**

Kaiser and Hogan (2010) describe two dominant perspectives on leadership. One view of leadership is that of a formally defined position. This view assumes that if someone is in charge of something, that person is therefore a leader. Alternately, leadership may be considered from a human evolutionary standpoint, as a mechanism that evolved over time to influence individuals to forego their individual interests in favor of coordinating collective effort for the long-term welfare of the group. From this view, leadership is a resource for group survival (Kaiser & Hogan, 2010). Based on this evolutionary standpoint, it follows that modern organizations continue to have leaders because such organizations have, over time, proved to be more successful than those without them.

Using this evolutionary perspective, leadership may be assessed by measuring group (i.e., organizational) outcomes that are critical for the success of the organization. In other words, the *effectiveness* of the leader can be defined as the extent to which the leader helps the organization achieve its collective goals. From a practical standpoint, this means that

leader effectiveness may be characterized as the performance of the leader's group or team (Craig & Kaiser, 2012).

### **Leader Effectiveness**

So the question must be posed: what can leaders do to influence group performance? There are likely to be as many answers to this question as there are researchers and practitioners in the field of leadership. But broadly speaking, it appears that leaders affect organizational outcomes via two channels: interpersonal influence and decision-making (Craig, 2008; Kaiser et al., 2008; Kaiser & Overfield, 2010). Craig and Kaiser (2012) describe leader decision-making as largely *intrapersonal*, because it is ultimately a process that occurs within a single individual. Conversely, the *interpersonal* influence channel includes leader behavior that directly affects the behavior of others.

### **The Bright Side of Leadership**

In many cases, as researchers have examined the types of leader behaviors that influence group performance, they have tended to do so through rose-colored glasses. Kaiser and Craig (2014) have argued that the academic study of leadership has demonstrated a positivity bias; in most cases, the concept of leadership has a positive connotation. Some have even gone so far as to suggest that Hitler cannot be considered a leader despite his ability to coordinate the collective efforts of a huge number of people in conducting horrific, devastating acts of violence and brutality (Burns, 2003). Consistent with this positivity bias, Cohen (2009) argued that business ethics and personal integrity were *necessary* (though perhaps not sufficient) for effective leadership.

Such an idealized view of leadership is consistent with the “bright side” approach, in which the focus is on factors that enhance leadership via their *presence* (Ashforth, 1994; Einarsen, Aasland, & Skogstad, 2007; Hogan & Hogan, 2001; Schmidt, 2008). Indeed, Kaiser and Craig (2014) note that the vast majority of the dominant theories in leadership—including most trait-based theories, leader competency models, leader behavior approaches, path-goal theory, leader-member exchange theory, charismatic leadership theory, and transformational leadership theory—fall into this category. Trait-based perspectives of leadership assume that leaders’ effectiveness is the result of their personal qualities, or traits (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002; Zaccaro, 2007). Similarly, leader competency models suggest that skill competencies (e.g., financial analysis, customer interaction) predict both short- and long-term executive performance (Russell, 2001). Researchers involved in the Ohio State leadership studies concluded that there were two distinct aspects of leader performance, consideration and initiating structure, both of which enhance leadership effectiveness (e.g., Fleishman, 1953; Halpin & Winer, 1957). Similarly, researchers at the University of Michigan concluded that there were two general leadership orientations – employee orientation and production orientation – and the best leadership approach involved both (e.g., Katz, Maccoby, & Morse, 1950). In both of these leader behavior approaches, the underlying assumption is that there are certain universal behaviors associated with effective leaders, and more is better. In path-goal theory, a leader is effective to the extent that he is able to show followers how they can achieve their own goals by doing what the leader wants them to do (House, 1971; House, 1996), again, with “more” path-goal clarifying behavior

being better. In leader-member exchange (LMX) theory, leaders may achieve desired organizational outcomes by developing high quality relationships with their subordinates that are characterized by trust and mutual respect (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975; Graen & Schiemann, 1978). According to the model of charismatic leadership (Conger & Kanungo, 1987, 1998; Conger, 1989), charismatic leaders are effective to the extent that they are able to communicate an inspirational vision and promote followers' perceptions that they and their vision are extraordinary (Conger, Kanungo, & Menon, 2000). Similarly, according to transformational leadership theory, the most effective leaders motivate followers to go beyond their own self-interested goals to do more than originally anticipated and internalize the goals of the leader (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978). In emphasizing certain factors associated with effective leadership via their presence, these theories exemplify the bright side approach to leadership. Yet, despite its prevalence in extant literature, there is evidence to suggest that such an approach does not represent the full range of factors related to effective leadership. Thus, in order to capture the full spectrum of leadership, it is necessary to examine the dark side of leadership as well.

### **The Dark Side of Leadership**

Thus far, we have focused on the bright side of leadership but have not clearly delineated it from the dark side of leadership. Hogan and Kaiser (2005) contend that it is necessary to distinguish between the two, since "good leadership promotes effective team and group performance... [whereas] bad leadership degrades the quality of life for everybody associated with it" (p. 169). In recent years, however, researchers have become increasingly

interested in examining the “dark side” of leadership, which focuses on the actively counterproductive factors that enhance leadership via their *absence* (Craig & Kaiser, 2012). This represents an important shift in the field. According to Craig and Kaiser, “there is a growing consensus in the field that dark side factors that undermine effective leadership are at least as important as traditional bright side factors to such outcomes as employee attitudes and organizational performance” (2012, p. 440).

Indeed, bad leadership can have widespread, deleterious effects on employees, organizations, and society at large. For instance, in the 2002 fiscal year alone, 354 U.S. business leaders were charged with some type of corporate fraud (Corporate Fraud Task Force, 2003). Furthermore, research suggests that corporate abuses likely cost U.S. organizations more than \$600 billion per year (Niehoff, 2003). Even so, there are varied opinions regarding just how prevalent destructive leaders are. Some suggest that highly publicized instances of corporate fraud and corruption (e.g., Enron) are anomalies and cannot be considered representative of the overall state of affairs. But some researchers suggest that such instances are just the tip of the iceberg (Jennings, 2006; Sayles & Smith, 2006). Based on their review of the extant literature, Kaiser and Hogan (2010) estimate that the base rate for low integrity managers is most likely in the 10 to 20% range. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that no organization is immune to the risk posed by destructive leaders.

**Defining destructive leadership.** One factor that may contribute to the varied opinions on the prevalence of destructive leadership is the lack of consensus regarding how destructive leadership should be defined. As is the case in many areas of psychology

(indeed, in research in general), different researchers have referred to the same phenomena using different names and have used the same names to mean different things (Craig & Kaiser, 2012). For instance, destructive leadership, as defined by Padilla, Hogan, and Kaiser (2007), requires leaders to be charismatic. But, Einarsen et al.'s (2007) definition of destructive leadership – appearing in the same journal issue – does not include this criterion (Craig & Kaiser, 2012). For the purposes of this study, destructive leadership will be defined as “systematic or repeated behavior by a leader, supervisor, or manager that knowingly violates, or inappropriately risks violating, the legitimate interest of the organization, its members, or other legitimate stakeholders by undermining or sabotaging the goals, tasks, resources, motivation, well-being, job satisfaction, or effectiveness of such stakeholders” (Craig & Kaiser, 2012, p. 441). This definition improves on earlier definitions proposed by Einarsen et al. (2007) and Padilla et al. (2007) in two important ways. First, it addresses the issue of intentionality, so as to distinguish it from other constructs such as managerial incompetence (Craig & Kaiser, 2012). Second, it considers stakeholders external to the organization, thereby allowing for the possibility that victims of destructive leadership may include legitimate external stakeholders, such as local community members (Craig & Kaiser, 2012).

Kaiser and Craig propose that destructive leadership may be considered a type of counterproductive work behavior (CWB), noting that their definition is “consistent with accepted definitions of CWB in its emphasis on harm to the legitimate interests of the organization and on intentionality of the actor” (2014, p. 7). What differentiates destructive

leadership from other forms of CWB, however, is the inclusion of “other legitimate stakeholders” as potential victims – an important expansion based on the unique responsibilities afforded to those in leadership roles (Kaiser & Craig, 2014).

**Measuring destructive leadership.** Having established a conceptual definition, it may be useful to review how researchers have attempted to operationally define destructive leadership. Historically, this has presented some challenges to researchers. A common method by which integrity has been measured is via the use of competency ratings provided by subordinates. Kaiser and Hogan (2010) examined how subordinate ratings have been used to assess managers’ integrity and presented several points: 1) the integrity-related items reviewed only represented the positive end of the construct; 2) due to the low base rate of overt violations of integrity, subordinate ratings of integrity as a competency are unlikely to uncover those destructive leaders who merely have yet to be caught; and 3) ratings of integrity demonstrate significant negative skew (i.e., nearly all managers are rated highly) and this does not seem to provide an accurate picture of the true state of affairs. Based on their research, they offered two conclusions. First, due to the very nature of the construct of integrity, managers who are low in integrity are unlikely to rate themselves as such. Therefore, observer ratings should be more likely to pinpoint those with low integrity. Further, while managers may not often get caught in a destructive act, those who are likely to engage in such activities tend to exhibit cues consistent with unethical behavior, which are in turn used by subordinates as they form an impression of their manager. Subordinates’ impressions of their managers then affect their interactions with them. Thus, subordinates are

likely to be the most useful source of information regarding their manager's integrity (Kaiser & Hogan, 2010).

In an effort to address the issues associated with using integrity competencies, Craig and Gustafson (1998) developed the Perceived Leader Integrity Scale (PLIS). This measure improves on competency ratings in that it focuses on the low end of the integrity continuum. Further, rather than using ratings of observed behavior, subordinates are asked to estimate the likelihood that their leader will engage in unethical behaviors. In essence, the PLIS is uniquely capable of capturing leaders' *reputations* for integrity, i.e., how others think of them (Hogan, 2007). Reputation refers to the collective impressions that individuals make on others and reflects one of two ways in which MacKinnon (1944) believed personality should be defined. The other way is by factors internal to individuals that explain their behavior. Hogan (2007) refers to this as their *identity*. Having outlined the merits of assessing leader integrity using measures reflective of their reputation, it may be useful at this point to examine the role that leader identity plays in destructive leadership.

### **Leadership and Personality**

As previously discussed, destructive leadership has broad-reaching, negative effects on employees, organizations, and society. Thus, from a scientist-practitioner standpoint, it stands to reason that an in-depth, empirical examination of the antecedents of destructive leadership would likely be a fruitful area of research. In their review of the destructive leadership literature, Padilla et al. (2007) assert that destructive leadership results from the interaction between personality configurations and environmental factors. They refer to these

factors as the “toxic triangle,” which comprises characteristics of leaders, followers, and the environment that are associated with destructive leadership (Padilla et al., 2007). While the current study focuses on leader characteristics, it is worth noting that these factors do not exert their effects in a vacuum; rather, they operate in concert with one another and with the environment.

Having established that there are multi-level factors associated with destructive leadership, the relative weight carried by leader personality should not be discounted. Indeed, Hogan and Kaiser (2005) contend that, “personality predicts leadership – who we are is how we lead” (p. 169). Their conclusion is consistent with the findings of a meta-analysis conducted by Judge et al. (2002), in which the authors examined the relationship between personality and leadership in 78 studies. They found that all five dimensions of the five-factor model (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness) were correlated with overall leadership, which included both emergence and effectiveness.

Thus far, evidence to support the link between personality and leadership has primarily focused on the bright side of leadership. Kaiser and Hogan (2007) offer an exception to this trend and provide several additional conclusions about leader personality that may be more relevant to destructive leadership. They argue that personality “flaws” shape leader judgment, which may result in poor decision-making, coworker alienation, and team destabilization. They further suggest that leader personality becomes increasingly consequential as leaders move up in a hierarchy, because there is more freedom of choice

(discretion) and more at stake due to individuals' decisions having more far-reaching consequences (Kaiser & Hogan, 2007). Indeed, Kaiser and Hogan argue that, "the dark side is the key to understanding managerial failure" (2007, p. 183). Hogan and Hogan (1997) suggested that personality disorders (DSM-IV; American Psychiatric Association, 1994) offer a useful taxonomy of the most significant determinants of managerial failure. Further, they contend that leaders' dark side tendencies may be considered extensions of the Big Five (Hogan & Hogan, 1997).

As evidenced by the preceding section, discussions of the link between personality traits and destructive leadership have been largely theoretical, with few empirical studies examining this link, and even fewer that do so in organizational settings. An overview of what is known about these antecedents—with empirical evidence where available—follows.

**Narcissism.** One personality construct that has been consistently linked to destructive leadership is narcissism (e.g., Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Hogan, Raskin, & Fazzini, 1990; House & Howell, 1992; Kets de Vries & Miller, 1985). Narcissism involves having an exaggerated sense of self-importance, fantasies of unlimited success and power, lack of empathy, exploitation of others, dominance, grandiosity, arrogance, entitlement, and the selfish pursuit of pleasure (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2000; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). Padilla et al. (2007) include narcissism as one of the elements in their "toxic triangle." Indeed, there is a substantial body of literature suggesting that narcissism is correlated with destructive leadership (e.g., Conger, 1990; Hogan et al., 1990, House & Howell, 1992; Maccoby, 2000; O'Connor, Mumford, Clifton, Gessner, & Connelly, 1995;

Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006; Sankowsky, 1995). Researchers have demonstrated that narcissistic leaders are self-absorbed and tend to discount or ignore others' viewpoints and well-being (Conger & Kanungo, 1998). They frequently demand unwavering obedience (O'Connor et al., 1995) and their sense of self-importance and entitlement can lead to abuses of power (Conger, 1990; Maccoby, 2000; Sankowsky, 1995). Narcissism has also been associated with poor judgment in business decision-making (e.g., firm acquisition choices and overpayment; Hayward & Hambrick, 1997; Malmendier & Tate, 2005).

While there is a substantial body of literature regarding narcissism and its relationship to destructive leadership, most of it consists of theoretical articles. Further, of the empirical research that has been conducted in this area, virtually none of it has examined this relationship prospectively within an organizational setting. One notable exception to this is a research study conducted by Blair, Hoffman, and Helland (2008). Based on multisource ratings provided for 154 managers representing a variety of industries, the researchers found that narcissism was negatively related to supervisory ratings of integrity. Interestingly, narcissism was found to be unrelated to subordinate ratings of integrity. However, it is worth noting that integrity was measured using five items on an evaluation scale, which were designed to examine the degree to which the leader engaged in certain behaviors (e.g., "Does not misrepresent him/herself for personal gain"), according to the rater. As previously discussed, this type of measure may not provide a comprehensive, accurate picture of destructive leadership, primarily because overt and observable counterproductive behavior has a very low base rate, and because most violations are only discovered after the fact

(Kaiser & Hogan, 2010). More recently, Hoffman, Strang, Kuhnert, Campbell, Kennedy, and LoPilato (2013) conducted a study of 68 managers and their subordinates to examine the relationships among narcissism, ethical context, and ethical leadership using the 10-item Ethical Leadership Scale (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005). There was no main effect of narcissism on subordinate ratings of ethical leadership. However, they did find an interaction effect between narcissism and ethical organizational context, such that narcissism was negatively related to ethical leadership in highly ethical contexts, but not related to ethical leadership in low ethical contexts (Hoffman et al., 2013). As with the Blair et al. (2008) study, the measure of ethical leadership used examined the extent to which leaders engaged in a particular behavior (e.g., “listens to what employees have to say”) according to subordinates, which may not offer a complete picture of destructive behaviors.

**Machiavellianism.** Machiavellianism is a personality trait named after Niccolò Machiavelli, who wrote *The Prince* in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In providing political advice to leaders, he famously argued that the ends always justify the means. Consequently, he advises leaders to lie, manipulate, and coerce followers toward a goal that ultimately equates to personalized power for the leader (Judge, Piccolo, & Kosalka, 2009; Deluga, 2001). In modern terms, Machiavellianism is defined as “cunning, manipulation and the use of any means necessary to achieve one’s political ends” (Judge et al., 2009, p. 867). Leaders high in Machiavellianism tend to be politically oriented, seek to exert control over their followers, and display a lack of affect in interpersonal relationships (McHoskey, 1999; Deluga, 2001). Because they also tend to be highly capable of influencing others, these leaders can typically

convince others to do things for the leader's own benefit, thus demonstrating clear abuses of power. For our purposes, the most problematic aspect of Machiavellianism may be that these leaders are unlikely to adhere to organizational procedures, or ethical and moral standards, in favor of behaving in ways to maximize their own power (Judge et al., 2009).

**Extraversion.** Extraversion is one dimension of the five-factor model of personality and represents the degree to which an individual is sociable, assertive, active, and energetic (Judge et al., 2002). Excessive extraversion may be characterized by behavior that is bold, aggressive, and grandiose (Judge et al., 2009). These individuals prefer the spotlight and are likely to give themselves (and their abilities) more credit than they deserve (Hogan & Hogan, 2001). Consequently, leaders who exhibit high levels of extraversion may be less likely to seek input from colleagues, which may result in alienation (Judge et al., 2009). Further, because extraverts typically have a high need for stimulation, they are more likely to exhibit transient enthusiasm for projects, people, and ideas (Beauducel, Brocke, & Leue, 2006). This may result in hasty or ill-advised decision-making (e.g., in aggressive pursuit of acquisitions/investments), and later, change in course if the returns on their investments do not measure up to their bold and aggressive expectations (Judge et al., 2009).

**Openness to experience.** Another dimension of the Big Five, openness to experience reflects the degree to which individuals are imaginative, unconventional, and autonomous (Judge et al., 2002). Individuals who score high on measures of openness have been characterized as nonconforming, priding themselves on their anti-authoritarian and anti-establishment attitudes (McCrae, 1996). Individuals who are very high on openness are

considered to be a potential hazard in conventional, hierarchical organizations (Judge & LePine, 2007). High openness leaders tend to be more willing to employ almost any strategy or technique if they believe it increases the likelihood of organizational success (Judge et al., 2009). Similar to highly extraverted leaders, leaders high in openness may be easily distracted by new, unconventional ideas. Consequently they may be more likely to use short-term fixes that challenge traditional, deeply held organizational values. In doing so, they may place the stability of the organization at risk (Judge et al., 2009).

**Emotional stability.** A third dimension of the Big Five, emotional stability (low neuroticism) reflects the degree to which individuals are confident, secure, and steady (Judge & Bono, 2001). Leaders high in emotional stability tend to be seen as reserved, laid-back, even leisurely (Goldberg, 1999). Given that the interpersonal component of leadership is inherently an emotional process (Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002), genuine emotional displays are likely to increase a leader's credibility among his followers (Kouzes & Posner, 2003). Conversely, excessively high levels of emotional stability – marked by steady, even-keeled composure – may be interpreted as apathy. Leaders high in emotional stability may suppress their true evaluations of their employees and offer minimal feedback. Thus, these leaders may impede employees who rely on feedback and supervisor interactions (Judge et al., 2009).

**Conscientiousness.** Another dimension of the Big Five, conscientiousness is characterized by individuals' tendency to be efficient, detail-oriented, deliberate, and demonstrate a strong sense of direction in pursuit of their goals (Costa & McCrae, 1992). At

high levels of conscientiousness, individuals may be overly cautious and analytical, and as a result, may delay critical decision-making and be less likely to incorporate innovative or risky strategies (Hogan & Hogan, 2001). In excess, conscientiousness may manifest itself as perfectionism and inflexibility. As a result, leaders who are very high in conscientiousness may be overly critical of subordinates' performance (Hogan & Hogan, 2001).

**Agreeableness.** The last dimension of the Big Five, agreeableness is marked by modesty, altruism, and trustworthiness (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Leaders who are high in agreeableness tend to avoid interpersonal conflict (Graziano, Jensen-Campbell, & Hair, 1996) and may be overly sensitive to the needs of others around them. This may lead to avoidance in difficult decision-making situations. Highly agreeable leaders are more likely to demonstrate leniency in their performance ratings (Bernardin, Cooke, & Villanova, 2000). As discussed in regards to integrity assessment issues, such appraisals likely skew rating distributions, such that a disproportionate number of employees receive high performance ratings. At an extreme, such skew has the potential to put the organization at risk for wrongful termination accusations made by employees who received less-than-accurate performance appraisals (Judge & LePine, 2007).

Thus, while there is reason to expect a relationship between each of these personality traits and destructive leadership, the vast majority of the work done in this area has been theoretical in nature. While Blair et al. (2008) did conduct an empirical study examining the association between narcissism and supervisory ratings of integrity, these ratings – based only on observed behavior – are unlikely to have captured the full spectrum of destructive

leadership. In regards to the remaining personality traits discussed in the previous section, the proposed theoretical relationships with destructive leadership have yet to be tested empirically.

### **The Current Study**

Given both the relevance of destructive leadership and the existing gaps in the extant literature, the purpose of the present study was to empirically examine the relations among leader personality traits and subordinate perceptions of destructive leadership in order to advance our understanding of the individual-level factors that might be predictive of destructive leader behavior.

The previous research finding that narcissism is negatively related to supervisor ratings (and has no correlation with subordinate ratings) was based on rater assessments of low integrity behavior in managers (Blair et al., 2008). Given that minor breaches of integrity (e.g., neglecting commitments, withholding information) may be perceived as honest mistakes rather than moral violations while major violations of integrity are usually covert (Kaiser & Hogan, 2010), ratings of observed behavior regarding violations of integrity are expected to be lower than the true rate at which these violations occur.

**Hypothesis 1.** Leader narcissism will be positively related to destructive leadership.

While empirical research regarding Machiavellianism and destructive leadership is limited, theoretical work provides a strong argument in support of this link. In essence, leaders high in Machiavellianism consider their own desire for power and control above the

interests of their followers. At a conceptual level, there is a clear link between this trait and destructive leadership as defined for the purposes of this study.

**Hypothesis 2.** Leader Machiavellianism will be positively related to destructive leadership.

Based on theory postulated by Judge et al. (2009) regarding the dark side of extraversion, highly extraverted leaders may be more likely to act on poor judgment and make ill-advised decisions regarding acquisitions and return on their investments. Similar to highly extraverted leaders, leaders who exhibit high levels of openness to experience may be easily distracted by unconventional ideas and may be more likely to use short-term fixes that challenge traditional, deeply held organizational values, placing the organization at risk (Judge et al., 2009).

**Hypothesis 3.** Leader extraversion will be positively related to destructive leadership.

**Hypothesis 4.** Leader openness will be positively related to destructive leadership.

Personality-based integrity tests that are frequently used during the employment screening process do not actually measure integrity directly; instead, they assess a combination of three dimensions of the Big Five (emotional stability, conscientiousness, and agreeableness) that reflect socialization (Hogan & Ones, 1997). Thus, these three dimensions would be expected to correlate negatively with destructive leadership. However, based on the theoretical rationale previously discussed, it may be the case that at very high levels of these dimensions, leaders become more likely to engage in destructive behaviors.

**Hypothesis 5.** Leader emotional stability and destructive leadership will have a non-linear relationship, such that both very low levels and very high levels of emotional stability will be associated with destructive leadership.

**Hypothesis 6.** Leader conscientiousness and destructive leadership will have a non-linear relationship, such that both very low levels and very high levels of conscientiousness will be associated with destructive leadership.

**Hypothesis 7.** Leader agreeableness and destructive leadership will have a non-linear relationship, such that both very low levels and very high levels of agreeableness will be associated with destructive leadership.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Study participants included 242 subordinate employees (71% female) reporting to 135 leaders (42% female) for at least three months, either currently (95.9%) or within the last three years (4.1%). The majority of participants were employed at one of several large, southeastern American universities, with the remaining participants employed in smaller organizations located throughout the southeast. In addition to education, a variety of industries were represented including: federal and state government, healthcare, information technology, professional services (e.g., law, medicine, consulting), financial services and banking, pharmaceuticals, and non-profit organizations. While the majority (63%) of leaders reported working in organizations of fewer than 100 employees, 13% represented organizations with more than 5000 employees. Leader participants were nearly evenly

divided among first line supervisors (32.6%), middle managers (31.1%) and executives (31.9%), while 3.7% considered themselves individual contributors.<sup>1</sup>

Ninety-four percent of subordinate participants worked with their manager full-time. Of those currently working with the target managers, 96% reported directly to their manager, and 4% reported indirectly (i.e., through an intermediate manager). The median length of time that subordinates had reported to the target managers was 36 months.

### **Procedure**

Individuals in supervisory positions at the targeted organizations were contacted by the researcher via email, given a brief overview of the study, and asked if they would be willing to participate. Leaders who agreed to participate were provided with a Qualtrics link to access the informed consent and survey.

Leader participants were asked to complete personality measures on narcissism, Machiavellianism, extraversion, openness to experience, emotional stability, conscientiousness, and agreeableness (described below), in addition to several demographic questions. Leader participants were also asked to provide contact information for at least one direct report subordinate with whom they had worked for three or more months.

The named subordinates were contacted by the researcher and given a brief overview of the study. Those who agreed to participate were sent a Qualtrics link to the subordinate survey to access the informed consent and survey items. Subordinate participants were asked to complete the short version of the Perceived Leader Integrity Scale (PLIS; Craig &

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<sup>1</sup> These individual contributors were included in the study because they reported having at least one current subordinate with whom they worked. Their subordinates, who also participated in the study, independently confirmed this relationship.

Gustafson, 1998) and a shortened version of the Destructive Leadership Questionnaire (DLQ; Shaw, Erickson, & Harvey, 2011). Subordinates were also asked to provide some demographic information and to answer several questions about their relationship to the target manager and their organizational tenure.

### **Measures**

**Narcissistic personality inventory.** Leader narcissism was assessed using a self-report measure consisting of items from the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1988; Kubarych, Deary, & Austin, 2004). Consistent with Galvin, Waldman, and Balthazard (2010)'s use of this measure in a sample of senior leaders, items from the vanity subscale were not included. The modified version contained 34 items that were combined into a single measure of narcissism, which is consistent with past research (Galvin et al., 2010; Kubarych et al., 2004). Each item consists of a pair of statements: one considered narcissistic, and the other non-narcissistic. An example is:

- A. I am not good at influencing people.
- B. I have a natural talent for influencing people.

In this case, "B" is considered the narcissistic choice. An individual's overall NPI score represents the proportion of narcissistic items endorsed. Higher scores indicate higher levels of narcissism. The internal consistency reliability estimate (Kuder-Richardson 20) for this scale was .80.

**Machiavellianism IV scale.** The 20-item, self-report Machiavellianism IV Scale (Mach IV; Christie & Geis, 1970) was used to assess Machiavellianism in leaders. The scale

was developed in congruence with statements from Machiavelli's *The Prince* and *Discourses* (Christie, 1970). Sample items include, "Never tell anyone the real reason you did something unless it is useful to do so," "The best way to handle people is to tell them what they want to hear," and "There is no excuse for lying to someone" (reverse scored). Items were rated using a seven-point Likert type response format ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree"). Machiavellianism scores were calculated by reverse coding the ten negatively-worded items and averaging across the individual's ratings on the 20 items comprising the scale. Higher scores indicate higher levels of Machiavellianism. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .70.

**Big Five personality inventory.** The Big Five factors of personality (extraversion, openness to experience, emotional stability, conscientiousness, and agreeableness) were assessed using the 20-item Mini-IPIP scales (Donnellan, Oswald, Baird, & Lucas, 2006), which is a short version of the 50-item International Personality Item Pool – Five Factor Model measure (Goldberg, 1999). Each of the five factors is assessed using four items, for a total of 20 self-report items. Items were rated using a five-point Likert type response format ranging from 1 ("very inaccurate") to 5 ("very accurate"). A scale score for each of the five personality traits was calculated by reverse coding any negatively-worded items and then averaging across the individual's ratings on the four items comprising each measure. Higher scores indicate higher levels of that personality trait.

**Extraversion.** The extraversion scale was used to assess the extent to which individuals are sociable, assertive and active. Leader participants were asked to rate the

extent to which each item described them. Sample items include, “Talk to a lot of different people at parties,” and “Keep in the background” (reverse scored). Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .77.

***Openness to experience.*** The openness (or “intellect”) scale was used to assess the extent to which individuals are imaginative, autonomous, and nonconformist. Leader participants were asked to rate the extent to which each item described them. Sample items include, “Have a vivid imagination,” and “Am not interested in abstract ideas” (reverse scored). Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .62.

***Emotional stability.*** The emotional stability scale was used to assess the extent to which individuals are confident, secure, and steady. Leader participants were asked to rate the extent to which each item described them. Sample items include, “Am relaxed most of the time,” and “Get upset easily” (reverse scored). Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .65.

***Conscientiousness.*** The conscientiousness scale was used to assess the extent to which individuals are orderly, attentive to details, and deliberate in their actions. Leader participants were asked to rate the extent to which each item described them. Sample items include, “Get chores done right away,” and “Make a mess of things” (reverse scored). Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .68.

***Agreeableness.*** The agreeableness scale was used to assess the extent to which individuals are modest, empathetic, and concerned for others. Leader participants were asked to rate the extent to which each item described them. Sample items include, “Sympathize

with others' feelings," and "Am not really interested in others" (reverse scored). Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .70.

**Perceived leader integrity scale.** Subordinates' impressions of their leaders' integrity were assessed using the short version of Craig and Gustafson's (1998) Perceived Leader Integrity Scale (PLIS). The full version of the PLIS contains 31 items reflecting both character (e.g., "is vindictive") and bad conduct (e.g., "always gets even"). Most of the items ask observers (i.e., subordinates) to rate the likelihood that their leaders would engage in a particular unethical behavior (Kaiser & Hogan, 2010). The PLIS is based on the premise that destructive leadership is not just the absence of high integrity behavior but involves "actively devious, manipulative, and dishonest behavior" (Craig & Kaiser, 2012, p. 442). Subordinate participants completed a short (eight-item) version of the PLIS. They rated their leader on a four-point Likert type response format representing the degree to which each item described the leader, ranging from 0 ("not at all") to 3 ("well"). Cronbach's alpha was 0.89.<sup>2</sup> PLIS scores were calculated for each subordinate by averaging across those eight items. For managers with two or more subordinate raters, the mean PLIS score across all subordinates for that manager was used. Higher PLIS scores indicate higher levels of destructive leadership (lower perceived integrity).

**Destructive leadership questionnaire.** The Destructive Leadership Questionnaire (DLQ; Shaw et al., 2011) was developed in congruence with Einarsen et al.'s (2007) conceptualization of destructive leadership, which they defined as the "systematic and repeated behavior by a leader, supervisor, or manager that violates the legitimate interest of

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<sup>2</sup> Calculated at the individual subordinate level; N = 241.

the organization by undermining and/or sabotaging the organization's goals, tasks, resources, and effectiveness and/or the motivation, well-being or job satisfaction of subordinates" (p. 208). Like the PLIS, the DLQ defines destructive leadership in terms of subordinate perceptions. Since the DLQ is a relatively new measure, it was being used in conjunction with the PLIS to examine how the two measures relate to one another and whether they demonstrate differential relationships with the antecedents of interest.

***DLQ factor analysis.*** Using an item-level correlation matrix constructed using listwise deletion (i.e., 127 x 127 matrix of pairwise correlations among items) provided by the first author of the DLQ (Shaw et al., 2011) allowed for an investigation of the factor structure of the full 127-item measure prior to its use in the current study. Exploratory factor analysis was conducted using principal axis extraction and the Harris-Kaiser oblique rotation. The goal of the factor analysis was not to produce the optimal short form of the DLQ, but to reduce the large number of items to a more manageable level while still retaining as much of the DLQ content as possible in order to maximize the generalizability of the results to the full version of the DLQ. Based on examination of the eigenvalue scree plot and interpretability of the rotated factor structure, a decision was made to apply a four-factor solution to the DLQ, which accounted for over 68% of the common variance. Based on an examination of item content, these factors were labeled Managerial Ineffectiveness (MI), Interpersonal Harshness (IH), Laissez-faire Management (LF), and Indecisiveness/Inaction (II). I set an a priori limit of no more than five items per factor in order to shorten the overall length of the survey as much as possible while still maintaining acceptable reliability and construct

coverage for each subscale. The five highest-loading, non-overlapping items for each of the four factors were selected, for a total of 20 items. Cronbach's alphas were 0.88 for MI, 0.77 for IH, 0.78 for LF, and 0.77 for II.<sup>3</sup>

DLQ items assess personal characteristics of the supervisor and supervisor behavior. Examples of items loading on the Managerial Ineffectiveness factor are: "My boss is not very good at inspiring others" and "My boss has difficulty mobilizing the efforts of others." Examples of items loading on the Interpersonal Harshness factor are: "My boss places brutal pressure on subordinates" and "My boss is a tyrant." Examples of items loading on the Laissez-faire Management factor are: "I often have to guess what my boss really expects of me" and "My boss does not have a clue what is going on in our business unit." Examples of items loading on the Indecisiveness/Inaction factor are: "In an ambiguous situation, my boss has great difficulty making a decision" and "My boss is afraid to take action when action is required." For all subscales, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the items using a six-point Likert type response format, ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 6 ("strongly agree"). Alternatively, participants could select "Don't Know" if they felt they were unable to rate their manager on a particular item.<sup>4</sup>

DLQ scores were calculated for each of the four empirically derived subscales. Scores were obtained for each subordinate by averaging across the five items comprising that subscale. For single-rater/manager dyads, the DLQ subscale scores calculated for the subordinate were used for that manager. Subscale scores were averaged across raters for

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<sup>3</sup> Calculated at the subordinate level,  $N_{MI} = 232$ ;  $N_{IH} = 233$ ;  $N_{LF} = 238$ ;  $N_{II} = 234$ .

<sup>4</sup> These responses were considered missing data.

managers with two or more subordinate raters. Higher DLQ scores indicate higher levels of destructive leadership.

## **Results**

### **Leader and Subordinate Measures**

Means, standard deviations, and correlations among the measured variables are provided in Table 1. Cronbach's coefficient alpha internal consistency estimates are included along the diagonal.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 (KR-20) was used to calculate the internal consistency estimate for the NPI.

Table 1  
*Summary of Intercorrelations, Means, and Standard Deviations*

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Extraversion	(.77)	.18*	.25**	.08	.12	-.11	.50**	.04	.02	.06	.02	.07
2. Openness		(.62)	.08	-.02	.19*	-.02	.19*	-.05	.03	-.03	-.08	.02
3. Emotional stability			(.65)	.10	.06	-.32**	.05	-.02	-.07	.04	-.02	-.09
4. Conscientiousness				(.68)	.23*	-.21*	.17*	-.09	.10	-.15	-.10	-.09
5. Agreeableness					(.70)	-.21*	-.05	-.09	-.07	-.13	-.12	-.10
6. Machiavellianism						(.70)	.16	.22*	.05	.06	.13	.06
7. Narcissism							(.80)	-.02	.05	-.02	-.08	.05
8. DLQ: MI								(.88)	.54**	.75**	.80**	.46**
9. DLQ: IH									(.77)	.41**	.41**	.41**
10. DLQ: LF										(.78)	.57**	.61**
11. DLQ: II											(.77)	.31**
12. PLIS												(.89)
<i>M</i>	3.16	3.96	3.87	4.03	4.14	2.92	0.32	1.61	1.44	1.56	1.46	0.17
<i>SD</i>	0.83	0.68	0.68	0.70	0.61	0.59	0.15	0.93	0.71	0.80	0.67	0.37

*Note.* Numbers along the diagonal are Cronbach's coefficient alpha values. Means, standard deviations, and reliabilities calculated at rater level ( $N_{\text{subordinate}} = 242$ ,  $N_{\text{manager}} = 135$ ). Intercorrelations calculated at manager level ( $N = 135$ ). PLIS = Perceived Leader Integrity Scale; DLQ = Destructive Leadership Questionnaire; MI = Managerial Ineffectiveness; IH = Interpersonal Harshness; LF = Laissez-faire management; II = Indecisiveness/Inaction.

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

As indicated in Table 1, the Mach-IV, NPI, extraversion and agreeableness measures demonstrated adequate internal consistency. The reliability estimates for the openness, emotional stability, and conscientiousness measures were somewhat lower, but remain consistent with those demonstrated by Donnellan et al. (2006). The PLIS and each of the four DLQ subscales demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency, with Cronbach's alphas greater than .76. Additionally, each of the four DLQ subscales demonstrated convergent validity by being positively related to the PLIS (managerial ineffectiveness,  $r = .46, p < .01$ ; interpersonal harshness,  $r = .41, p < .01$ ; laissez-faire management,  $r = .61, p < .01$ , indecisiveness/inaction,  $r = .31, p < .01$ ).

### **Tests for Non-Normality**

Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests of normality indicated that the distribution of responses were significantly different from normal on all variables with the exception of Machiavellianism. Logarithmic transformations were performed for the non-normal variables. All but one variable (narcissism) remained non-normal after the transformation. Regression analyses were performed twice: once using the untransformed variables, and a second time using the transformed variables. The hypothesis test conclusions were the same regardless of whether the transformed or untransformed variables were used. To aid in scale interpretability, the following results are based on analyses conducted with the untransformed variables.

### Linear and Curvilinear Effects

Hypothesis 1 predicted that leader narcissism would be positively related to subordinate perceptions of destructive leadership. To test this, each destructive leadership measure was regressed separately on leader ratings of narcissism. The results of these regressions are displayed in Table 2. Leader narcissism was not associated with subordinates' perceptions of destructive leadership as measured by the PLIS, DLQ: MI, DLQ: IH, DLQ: LF, or DLQ:II. Thus, hypothesis 1 was not supported.

Table 2

*Leader Narcissism as a Predictor of Subordinates' Perceptions of Destructive Leadership*

Destructive Leadership Measures	$\beta$	$t$	$p$	$R^2$
PLIS	.05	0.63	.530	.00
DLQ: MI	-.02	-0.21	.833	.00
DLQ: IH	.05	0.54	.589	.00
DLQ: LF	-.02	-0.20	.839	.00
DLQ: II	-.08	-0.97	.332	.01

Note.  $df = 133$ .

Hypothesis 2 predicted that leader Machiavellianism would be positively related to perceptions of destructive leadership. To test this, each destructive leadership measure was regressed separately on leader ratings of Machiavellianism. The results are displayed in Table 3. Leader Machiavellianism was positively correlated with Managerial Ineffectiveness ( $\beta = .22$ ,  $t(133) = 2.56$ ,  $p = .012$ ), such that higher levels of Machiavellianism were associated with higher levels of Managerial Ineffectiveness (see Figure 1). However, leader Machiavellianism was not related to the other four destructive leadership measures (PLIS, DLQ: IH, DLQ: LF, DLQ:II). Taken as a whole, Hypothesis 2 was partially supported.

Table 3  
*Leader Machiavellianism as a Predictor of Subordinates' Perceptions of Destructive Leadership*

Destructive Leadership Measures	$\beta$	$t$	$p$	$R^2$
PLIS	.06	0.74	.462	.00
DLQ: MI	.22	2.56	.012	.05
DLQ: IH	.05	0.60	.551	.00
DLQ: LF	.06	0.68	.495	.00
DLQ: II	.13	1.46	.148	.02

Note.  $df = 133$ .

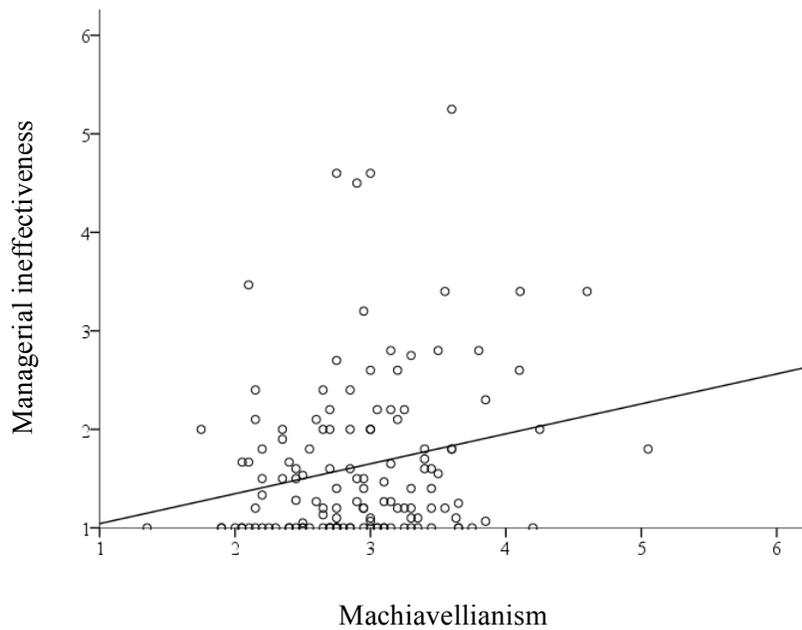


Figure 1. Relationship between leader Machiavellianism and subordinates' perceptions of managerial ineffectiveness.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that leader extraversion would be positively related to perceptions of destructive leadership. To test this, each destructive leadership measure was regressed separately on leader ratings of extraversion. The results are displayed in Table 4.

Leader extraversion was not associated with any of the five destructive leadership measures.

Hypothesis 3 was therefore not supported.

Table 4

*Leader Extraversion as a Predictor of Subordinates' Perceptions of Destructive Leadership*

Destructive Leadership Measures	$\beta$	$t$	$p$	$R^2$
PLIS	.07	0.82	.413	.01
DLQ: MI	.04	0.44	.661	.00
DLQ: IH	.02	0.19	.850	.00
DLQ: LF	.06	0.65	.517	.00
DLQ: II	.02	0.18	.857	.00

Note.  $df = 133$ .

Hypothesis 4 predicted that leader openness would be positively related to perceptions of destructive leadership. To test this, each destructive leadership measure was regressed separately on leader ratings of openness. The results are displayed in Table 5.

Leader openness was not associated with any of the five destructive leadership measures.

Hypothesis 4 was not supported.

Table 5

*Leader Openness as a Predictor of Subordinates' Perceptions of Destructive Leadership*

Destructive Leadership Measures	$\beta$	$t$	$p$	$R^2$
PLIS	.02	0.18	.862	.00
DLQ: MI	-.05	-0.58	.562	.00
DLQ: IH	.03	0.39	.700	.00
DLQ: LF	-.03	-0.39	.698	.00
DLQ: II	-.08	-0.93	.356	.01

Note.  $df = 133$ .

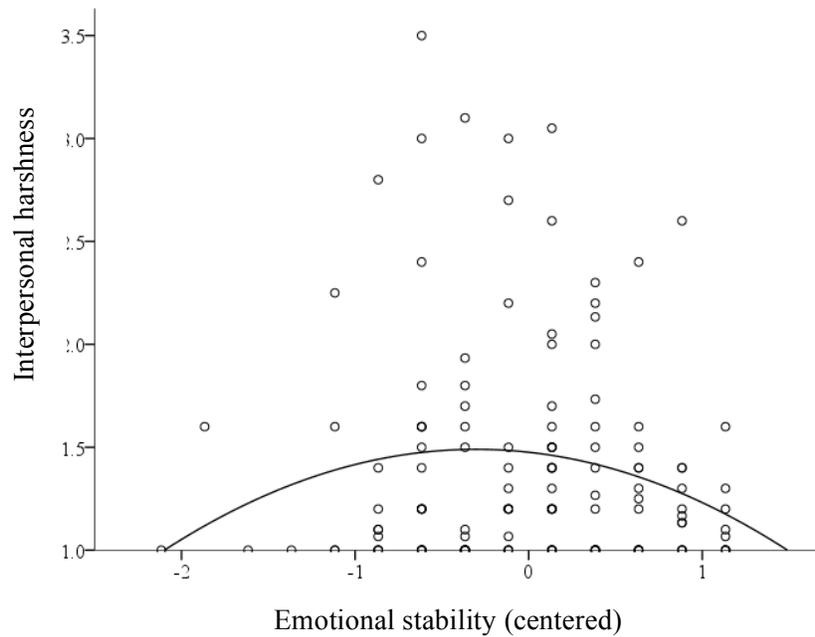
Hypothesis 5 predicted that leader emotional stability would have a curvilinear relationship with perceptions of destructive leadership, such that both very low and very high levels of emotional stability would be associated with higher levels of destructive leadership. To test this, each destructive leadership measure was regressed separately on leader ratings of emotional stability and emotional stability squared. Table 6 shows the results for both linear-term-only (Model 1) and linear-plus-squared-term (Model 2) regressions. Interestingly, there was a significant relationship between the squared leader emotional stability term and Interpersonal Harshness, but in the opposite direction of my prediction ( $\beta = -.18$ ,  $t(132) = -2.01$ ,  $p = .046$ ). In other words, very low and very high leader ratings of emotional stability were associated with lower levels of Interpersonal Harshness (see Figure 2). The linear emotional stability term was not associated with Interpersonal Harshness in either Model 1 ( $\beta = -.07$ ,  $t(133) = -0.84$ , *ns*) or Model 2 ( $\beta = -.12$ ,  $t(132) = -1.32$ , *ns*). Leader emotional stability was not related to any of the other measures of destructive leadership (using either model). Taken all together, hypothesis 5 was not supported.

Table 6  
*Leader Emotional Stability as a Predictor of Subordinates' Perceptions of Destructive Leadership*

Destructive Leadership Measures	Emotional Stability			Emotional Stability <sup>2</sup>			Model R <sup>2</sup>
	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	
PLIS							
Linear term only	-.09	-1.09 <sup>a</sup>	.277				.01
Linear and squared terms	-.09	-1.04 <sup>b</sup>	.299	.00	0.04 <sup>b</sup>	.967	.01
DLQ: MI							
Linear term only	-.02	-0.21 <sup>a</sup>	.831				.00
Linear and squared terms	-.03	-0.36 <sup>b</sup>	.722	-.05	-0.60 <sup>b</sup>	.548	.00
DLQ: IH							
Linear term only	-.07	-0.84 <sup>a</sup>	.404				.01
Linear and squared terms	-.12	-1.32 <sup>b</sup>	.189	-.18	-2.01 <sup>b</sup>	.046	.04
DLQ: LF							
Linear term only	.04	0.49 <sup>a</sup>	.626				.00
Linear and squared terms	.02	0.25 <sup>b</sup>	.806	-.08	-0.91 <sup>b</sup>	.366	.01
DLQ: II							
Linear term only	-.02	-0.28 <sup>a</sup>	.779				.00
Linear and squared terms	-.01	-0.16 <sup>b</sup>	.875	.04	0.46 <sup>b</sup>	.645	.00

Note. N = 135. Model 1 = Linear term only model; Model 2 = Linear and squared terms model.

<sup>a</sup> *df* = 133. <sup>b</sup> *df* = 132.



**Figure 2.** Curvilinear relationship between leader emotional stability and subordinates' perceptions of interpersonal harshness.

Hypothesis 6 predicted that leader conscientiousness would have a curvilinear relationship with perceptions of destructive leadership, such that both very low and very high levels of conscientiousness would be associated with higher levels of destructive leadership. To test this, each destructive leadership measure was regressed separately on leader ratings of conscientiousness and conscientiousness squared. Table 7 shows the results for both linear-term-only (Model 1) and linear-plus-squared-term (Model 2) regressions. Leader conscientiousness was not related to any of the five destructive leadership measures. Therefore, hypothesis 6 was not supported.

Table 7  
*Leader Conscientiousness as a Predictor of Subordinates' Perceptions of Destructive Leadership*

Destructive Leadership Measures	Conscientiousness			Conscientiousness <sup>2</sup>			Model R <sup>2</sup>
	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	
PLIS							
Linear term only	-.09	-1.06 <sup>a</sup>	.292				.01
Linear and squared terms	-.10	-0.95 <sup>b</sup>	.342	-.01	-0.07 <sup>b</sup>	.947	.01
DLQ: MI							
Linear term only	-.09	-1.05 <sup>a</sup>	.298				.01
Linear and squared terms	-.09	-0.86 <sup>b</sup>	.390	.01	0.10 <sup>b</sup>	.922	.01
DLQ: IH							
Linear term only	.10	1.12 <sup>a</sup>	.265				.01
Linear and squared terms	.05	0.48 <sup>b</sup>	.635	-.10	-1.04 <sup>b</sup>	.303	.02
DLQ: LF							
Linear term only	-.15	-1.79 <sup>a</sup>	.076				.02
Linear and squared terms	-.16	1.63 <sup>b</sup>	.106	-.01	-0.14 <sup>b</sup>	.889	.02
DLQ: II							
Linear term only	-.10	-1.17 <sup>a</sup>	.246				.01
Linear and squared terms	-.09	-0.93 <sup>b</sup>	.348	.02	0.15 <sup>b</sup>	.884	.01

Note. N = 135. Model 1 = Linear term only model; Model 2 = Linear and squared terms model.  
<sup>a</sup> *df* = 133. <sup>b</sup> *df* = 132.

Hypothesis 7 predicted that leader agreeableness would have a curvilinear relationship with perceptions of destructive leadership, such that both very low and very high levels of leader agreeableness would be associated with higher levels of destructive leadership. To test this, each destructive leadership measure was regressed separately on leader ratings of agreeableness and agreeableness squared. Table 8 shows the results for both linear-term-only (Model 1) and linear-plus-squared-term (Model 2) regressions. There was a significant relationship between the squared agreeableness term and destructive leadership, in the predicted direction ( $\beta = .24$ ,  $t(132) = 2.33$ ,  $p = .021$ ). In other words, very low and very high leader ratings of agreeableness were associated with higher levels of destructive leadership, as measured by the PLIS (see Figure 3). The linear agreeableness term was not

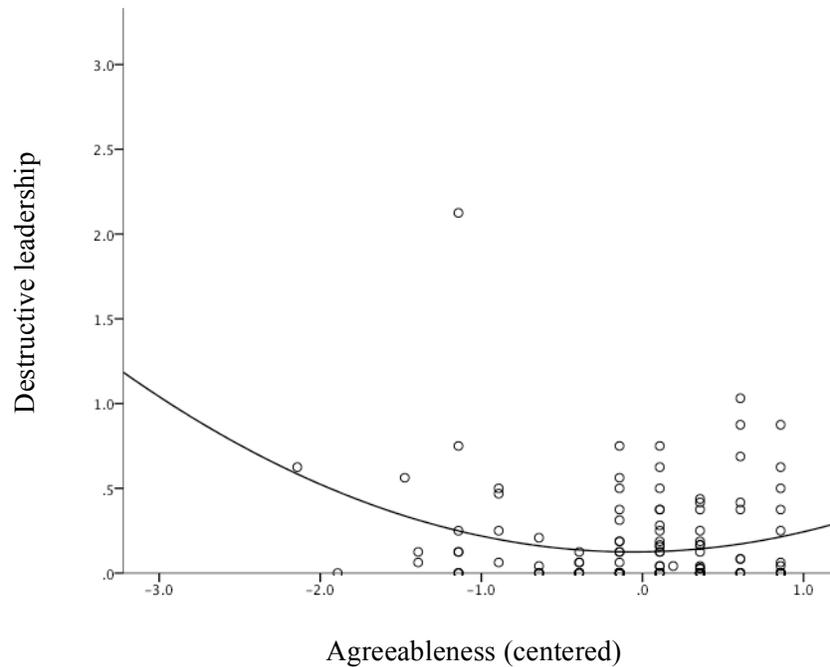
associated with PLIS ratings in either Model 1 ( $\beta = -.10$ ,  $t(133) = -1.19$ , *ns*) or Model 2 ( $\beta = .03$ ,  $t(132) = 0.26$ , *ns*). Taken as a whole, hypothesis 7 was partially supported.

Table 8  
*Leader Agreeableness as a Predictor of Subordinates' Perceptions of Destructive Leadership*

Destructive Leadership Measures	Agreeableness			Agreeableness <sup>2</sup>			Model
	$\beta$	$t$	$p$	$\beta$	$t$	$p$	$R^2$
PLIS							
Linear term only	-.10	-1.19 <sup>a</sup>	.236				.01
Linear and squared terms	.03	0.26 <sup>b</sup>	.792	.24	2.33 <sup>b</sup>	.021	.05
DLQ: MI							
Linear term only	-.09	-0.99 <sup>a</sup>	.325				.01
Linear and squared terms	-.09	-0.85 <sup>b</sup>	.395	-.01	-0.05 <sup>b</sup>	.957	.01
DLQ: IH							
Linear term only	-.07	-0.76 <sup>a</sup>	.449				.00
Linear and squared terms	-.07	-0.67 <sup>b</sup>	.504	-.01	-0.07 <sup>b</sup>	.946	.00
DLQ: LF							
Linear term only	-.13	-1.46 <sup>a</sup>	.146				.02
Linear and squared terms	-.17	-1.60 <sup>b</sup>	.112	-.07	-0.69 <sup>b</sup>	.490	.02
DLQ: II							
Linear term only	-.12	-1.45 <sup>a</sup>	.150				.02
Linear and squared terms	-.16	-1.57 <sup>b</sup>	.118	-.07	-0.67 <sup>b</sup>	.504	.02

Note. N = 135. Model 1 = Linear term only model; Model 2 = Linear and squared terms model.

<sup>a</sup>  $df = 133$ . <sup>b</sup>  $df = 132$ .



**Figure 3.** Curvilinear relationship between leader agreeableness and subordinates' perceptions of destructive leadership.

## Discussion

Despite the preponderance of research examining the relationships among personality traits and leadership, there has been virtually no empirical research conducted to examine personality traits with destructive leadership specifically. Of the empirical research that has been conducted in this area, many of the studies used retrospective, observer ratings of leader traits (e.g., Rijsenbilt & Commandeur, 2013), and public records of destructive leadership behaviors (e.g., Watts et al., 2013). This study contributes to the literature by empirically and prospectively examining the role of seven self-rated leader personality traits (narcissism,

Machiavellianism, extraversion, openness, emotional stability, conscientiousness, and agreeableness) in predicting subordinate perceptions of destructive leadership.

### **Main Findings and Implications**

One aim of the study was to compare a newer measure of destructive leadership (DLQ; Shaw et al., 2011) with one that is more established in the literature (PLIS; Craig & Gustafson, 1998). A strength of the DLQ, shared with the PLIS, is that it contained a number of very clearly negative items (e.g., “my boss places brutal pressure on subordinates” and “my boss is a tyrant”), as compared to the vast majority of existing integrity measures that focus on positive characteristics to the exclusion of destructive ones. However, there was a concern that the length of the full version might unduly burden participants. In conducting a factor analysis of the DLQ for the purpose of shortening it for use in this study, it became apparent that, not only did Shaw et al.’s (2011) proposed 22-factor solution not hold, but the DLQ actually measures both destructive leadership (as defined in the present study) and more general leadership ineffectiveness. In fact, of the four latent factors identified in the EFA, only one of them (Interpersonal Harshness) was fully consistent with the intentionality aspect of the destructive leadership definition. It is worth noting that Shaw et al. (2011) based their measure on the Einarsen et al. (2007) definition, which does not address intentionality and therefore allows for incompetence and ineffectiveness to be considered forms of destructive leadership. The main arguments against including incompetence and ineffectiveness are that 1) effectiveness has already been measured and studied in decades of traditional leadership research, so the more recent focus on deliberate destructiveness

becomes diluted and 2) including ineffectiveness fails to consider destructive *intent* (i.e., because a leader can be well intentioned but still ineffective; Craig & Kaiser, 2012). It may be the case that further item development and scale validation would be needed before the DLQ could be considered a pure measure of destructive leadership, as presently defined.

Consistent with my hypothesis, agreeableness was found to have a curvilinear relationship with destructive leadership, such that leaders who were very low and very high in agreeableness tended to be rated as more destructive, as measured by the PLIS. This is somewhat consistent with findings reported by Kalshoven, Den Hartog, and De Hoogh (2011), who found a positive relationship between agreeableness and both power sharing and fairness in a study of 150 managers. The major difference between the present study and the Kalshoven et al. (2011) study relates to the criterion measures used. The power sharing and fairness measures (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008) each have just one negative behavioral item and – particularly in the case of the power sharing measure – seem to primarily reflect supererogatory behaviors. That is, while the presence of such behaviors may be commendable, they are not morally or ethically required (Urmson, 1958). Thus, scoring low on these types of measures may not be indicative of destructive leadership as Craig and Kaiser (2012) defined it. This difference in the measures used and the resultant findings suggests that while there may be a linear relationship between certain personality traits (e.g., agreeableness) and prosocial/ethical leadership, the same relationship may not necessarily extend to destructive leadership. More research is needed to examine the relationship

between ethical leadership and destructive leadership, as the differential relationships with predictor variables suggest that these two constructs may not lie on the same continuum.

Contrary to the hypothesis, narcissism was not found to be related to subordinate perceptions of destructive leadership. This was somewhat surprising, given previous empirical research linking narcissism to low manager integrity (Blair et al., 2008) in addition to an abundance of theoretical work that seems to support a link between narcissism and unethical or destructive leadership (e.g., Kets de Vries & Miller, 1985; Judge et al., 2009; Mumford, Connelly, Helton, Strange, & Osburn, 2001). However, the present finding is consistent with Hoffman et al.'s recent (2013) study, in which narcissism was unrelated to ethical leadership in a study conducted with 68 managers and their subordinates. Given the pattern of findings, it may be that narcissism is more predictive of employee workplace deviance and counterproductive work behaviors (e.g., Judge, LePine, & Rich, 2006) than it is of destructive behavior at the leader level. It also may be a function of the relationship between rater and ratee. In both the present study and the Hoffman et al. (2013) study, manager ratings (on destructive leadership and ethical leadership, respectively) were provided by subordinates. In the Blair et al. (2008) study, narcissism was found to be negatively related to manager integrity only when ratings were provided by their own supervisors; when subordinates provided integrity ratings for their managers, there was no relationship observed.

Another possible explanation for the weak association between narcissism and destructive leadership may lie in the underlying dimensionality of the NPI. A number of

researchers have attempted to validate the factor structure of this measure, and have argued for the presence of two (Kubarych et al., 2004; Corry, Merritt, Mrug, & Pamp, 2008), three (Kubarych et al., 2004; Ackerman, Witt, Donnellan, Trzesniewski, Robins, & Kashy, 2011), four (Emmons, 1984, 1987), or even seven factors, as suggested by Raskin and Terry (1988). Researchers have further argued that, while the NPI may measure several lower order factors, it does indeed measure a single higher-order, general narcissism factor (e.g., Emmons, 1987; Kubarych et al., 2004; Watson & Biderman, 1993). Consistent with this, other management researchers have treated narcissism as unidimensional in their research (Hoffman et al., 2013; Brunell, Gentry, Campbell, Hoffman, & Kuhnert, 2008; Judge et al., 2006). Thus, although it is often theoretically conceptualized as multidimensional, narcissism is frequently treated as a unidimensional trait in organizational research. In some instances, this distinction may not necessarily be problematic – or even evident – if different aspects of narcissism all relate similarly to the criterion of interest. However, narcissism appears to have both a bright and a dark side (Judge et al., 2009; Campbell & Campbell, 2009; Paulhus, 1998). Some aspects, like high self-esteem, are generally considered to be adaptive, while others, such as entitlement, tend to be more maladaptive (e.g., Paunonen, Lönnqvist, Verkasalo, Leikas, & Nissinen, 2006). Moreover, the extent to which certain narcissistic characteristics are perceived as adaptive may depend on the focal individual's position. That is, narcissistic characteristics (e.g., risk-taking and grandiosity) that are considered maladaptive in the general population may be more likely to be perceived as neutral or even commendable in leaders (Watts et al., 2013). Similarly, the extent to which

subordinates perceive narcissistic tendencies favorably is likely to change over time (Hogan & Hogan, 2001), with the benefits typically seen in the “emerging” zone (e.g., job interviews, short-term projects), and the costs typically seen in the “enduring” zone (e.g., long-term work relationships; Paulhus, 1998; Campbell & Campbell, 2009). Three months (the minimum amount of time subordinate-leader dyads had worked together in the present study) may still be part of the “emerging” zone, such that subordinates primarily perceive the benefits – rather than the costs – of leader narcissism. It may be the case that there is a relationship between narcissism and perceptions of destructive leadership, but that this only becomes evident after a longer period of time.

The hypotheses that leader extraversion and openness would each be related to subordinate perceptions of destructive leadership were not supported. Similarly, the hypothesis that conscientiousness would be curvilinearly related to destructive leadership was not supported. And although there was a curvilinear relationship between emotional stability and interpersonal harshness, it was in the opposite direction from that predicted: leaders with very low and very high levels of emotional stability tended to receive lower ratings on interpersonal harshness than those exhibiting mid-range scores of emotional stability. Taken together, these unexpected findings have important implications in light of the meta-analysis conducted by Judge et al. (2002). In their examination of the links among the Big Five traits and leadership emergence and effectiveness, they found significant, robust relationships between each of the five personality traits and leadership. Specifically, they found that, of the Big Five traits, extraversion was the strongest predictor of overall

leadership (i.e., effectiveness and emergence combined), followed by conscientiousness, and then openness to experience and neuroticism (the latter two being of equal magnitude but opposite direction). The fact that leadership emergence/effectiveness and destructive leadership are differentially related to these Big Five traits provides evidence that these two constructs cannot be viewed as opposite ends of a single leadership performance continuum. Leadership effectiveness/emergence and destructive leadership appear to be two distinct constructs. This pattern of results is consistent with the proposition that leaders who are highly effective are not necessarily devoid of destructive behaviors, nor are destructive leaders necessarily ineffective at also achieving legitimate outcomes.

There was a positive relationship between Machiavellianism and the Managerial Ineffectiveness subscale of the DLQ, which is characterized by a leader's inability to persuade and mobilize efforts of his subordinates. Of all the facets of Shaw et al.'s (2011) destructive leadership, it is surprising that Machiavellianism was found to be correlated with this one. One of the defining features of Machiavellian leaders is that they are highly capable of influencing others. Yet, the findings indicate that subordinates perceive Machiavellian leaders as just the opposite. It is important to note that, although Managerial Ineffectiveness was an empirically derived subscale of the DLQ, it is a pure measure of ineffectiveness with no implications for destructiveness. As mentioned previously, a manager who is "not very good at inspiring others" may not be particularly effective in his role, but such ineffectiveness does not necessarily indicate a tendency towards destructive leadership. As

such, there was no relationship observed between Machiavellianism and destructive leadership as it was defined in this study.

Most of the existing research on unethical and destructive leadership research has examined the outcomes associated with these types of leadership, such as employee attitudes, behavioral outcomes, and job performance, with relatively little attention given to the antecedents (Treviño, den Nieuwenboer, & Kish-Gephart, 2014). Of the research that has examined destructive leadership as an outcome, there is increasingly strong evidence that situational and contextual characteristics play a critical role, and that the role of individual differences alone may be relatively small. For example, while Hoffman et al. (2013) did not find a significant relationship between narcissism and ethical leadership, they did find a significant interaction effect between narcissism and ethical context in predicting ethical leadership, such that narcissism was negatively related to ethical leadership in highly ethical contexts, but was not significantly related to ethical leadership in low ethical contexts. While that study demonstrated the importance of context at the organization level, there is evidence that context is important at other levels, as well. In a study of US Army soldiers in Iraq, Schaubroeck and colleagues (2012) found that unit-level ethical culture mediated the relationship between unit-level ethical leadership and both unit-level unethical behavior (i.e., transgressions against the Army) as well as individuals' intentions to report unethical conduct of other soldiers. Finally, Brown and Treviño (2014) found that leaders who had ethical role models during their careers tended to receive more favorable ethical leadership ratings from their subordinates. Taken together with the results from the present study, it appears that

contextual and situational factors at the person, unit, and organization levels are likely to be at least as important as individual differences – if not more so – when it comes to predicting destructive leadership.

In terms of practical implications, these findings suggest that all personality types are likely to be found among destructive leaders. It may be that destructive leadership is more strongly related to situational and contextual factors and the interaction of these factors with individual differences than it is to main effects of individual differences (e.g., personality) alone. Taken further, this would imply that even past destructive behavior (or a lack thereof) might not be as useful a predictor of future destructive behavior as the interaction of destructive tendencies with situational factors. Based on research examining ethical context, a leader may be more or less inclined to engage in destructive behaviors depending on his work environment. For instance, a manager leaving one organization that is known for its brutal treatment of lower-level subordinates may be much less likely to engage in such behavior at an organization with a stronger ethical context, and vice-versa. Indeed, anecdotes abound which describe individuals who displayed their first signs of destructive behavior only later in their careers, after having “kept their noses clean” for years prior. So while destructive leadership may not lend itself to being completely prevented (or corrected) through selection alone, it would seem to fall well within the realm of organizational development. As previously discussed, it seems that there are potentially powerful influences at multiple levels, both within the organization and at the level of the organization. More research is needed to identify contextual factors that play a role in

whether or not leaders engage in destructive behavior and how these factors interact with individual differences (cf. Padilla et al., 2007; Kaiser & Craig, 2014). This is particularly important because factors that are thought to be related to destructive leadership, such as ethical culture, are often intertwined with formal systems in the organization (e.g., decision-making processes, organizational structure, and performance management systems) that may be largely influenced by senior leadership (Treviño et al., 2014). Future research should seek to explore the reciprocal effects of destructive leadership and (un)ethical context, as well as factors that may attenuate (or exacerbate) the trickle-down effect of destructive leadership.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

The findings and implications of this study should be considered in light of a few limitations. Due to the low overall response rate, the sample size was relatively small and as a result, there may not have been sufficient power to detect weaker effects, particularly curvilinear ones. Additional research examining the relationships among personality traits and destructive leadership is encouraged, particularly to explore the boundary conditions under which these relationships (or lack thereof) exist. In particular, it may be fruitful to examine whether these relationships differ depending on job type, tenure, and organizational level. Another limitation of this study is that it did not account for how well the subordinate rater and his leader knew one another. Time with current manager was used to qualify participants for the study, but it could be that there were subordinate-leader dyads who had worked together for a long period of time but not very closely (or vice-versa). Future research should include a measure of self-rated familiarity with the rater. This is particularly

important for research involving narcissism, as narcissists tend to derogate others in an effort to maintain their own self-esteem, thereby eroding interpersonal relationships (Campbell et al., 2000). In those instances, it may be the case that their subordinates simply do not know them as well. Finally, future research should examine the extent to which manager ratings of destructive leadership differ by rater source (i.e., subordinate, supervisor, and peer). Used together, it may be that multisource ratings can provide a more complete picture of the likelihood of leaders engaging in destructive behavior.

### **Conclusion**

This study examined the relationships among leader personality traits and subordinate perceptions of destructive leadership. Agreeableness was found to be curvilinearly related to destructive leadership, such that leaders who are very low and very high in agreeableness were more likely to be rated as destructive by their subordinates, as measured by the PLIS. Interestingly, emotional stability was found to be curvilinearly related to interpersonal harshness, such that leaders who are very low and very high in emotional stability were more likely to receive lower interpersonal harshness ratings as compared to leaders with more moderate emotional stability levels. Finally, Machiavellian leaders tended to receive higher ratings on managerial ineffectiveness. Leader narcissism, extraversion, openness, and conscientiousness were not found to be related to any of the five measures of destructive leadership. Together these findings suggest that personality traits play a less prominent role in predicting destructive leadership than expected, and thus situational and contextual factors – and the interaction of these factors with individual differences – may play a larger role in

predicting destructive leadership. Furthermore, this study offers evidence that destructive leadership is distinct from ineffective leadership, and perhaps from ethical leadership as well. Researchers should continue to examine the antecedents of destructive leadership, and organizations should work toward promoting ethical contexts and setting strong ethical norms to minimize the likelihood of destructive leadership.

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**APPENDICES**

## Appendix A

## Narcissistic Personality Inventory

**For each pair of items, choose the one that you most identify with. If you identify with both equally, choose which one you think is most important.**

I am not good at influencing people.

**Modesty doesn't become me.**

I tend to be a fairly cautious person.

**I know that I am good because everyone keeps telling me so.**

The thought of ruling the world frightens the hell out of me.

**I can usually talk my way out of anything.**

**I like to be the center of attention.**

I am not too concerned about success.

I am no better or worse than most people.

I am not sure if I would make a good leader.

**I am assertive.**

I don't mind following orders.

**I find it easy to manipulate people.**

I usually get the respect that I deserve.

**I can read people like a book.**

If I feel competent I am willing to take responsibility for making decisions.

**I want to amount to something in the eyes of the world.**

**I will usually show off if I get the chance.**

Sometimes I am not sure of what I am doing.

Sometimes I tell good stories.

**I have a natural talent for influencing people.**

I am essentially a modest person.

**I would do almost anything on a dare.**

When people compliment me I sometimes get embarrassed.

**If I ruled the world it would be a better place.**

I try to accept the consequences of my behaviour.

I prefer to blend in with the crowd.

**I will be a success.**

**I think I am a special person.**

**I see myself as a good leader.**

I wish I were more assertive.

**I like having authority over other people.**

I don't like it when I find myself manipulating people.

**I insist upon getting the respect that is due me.**

People are sometimes hard to understand.

**I like to take responsibility for making decisions.**

I just want to be reasonably happy.

I try not to be a show off.

**I always know what I am doing.**

**Everybody likes to hear my stories.**

**I expect a good deal from other people.**

I take my satisfactions as they come.

**I like to be complimented.**

**I have a strong will to power.**

It makes me uncomfortable to be the center of attention.

**I can live my life any way I want to.**

Being an authority doesn't mean that much to me.

It makes little difference to me whether I am a leader or not.

**I am going to be a great person.**

People sometimes believe what I tell them.

**I am a born leader.**

**I wish someone would someday write my biography.**

There is a lot that I can learn from other people.

**I am an extraordinary person.**

I like to do things for other people.

**I will never be satisfied until I get all that I deserve.**

Compliments embarrass me.

Power for its own sake doesn't interest me.

**I really like to be the center of attention.**

People can't always live their lives in terms of what they want.

**People always seem to recognize my authority.**

**I would prefer to be a leader.**

I hope I am going to be successful.

**I can make anybody believe anything I want them to.**

Leadership is a quality that takes a long time to develop.

I don't like people to pry into my life for any reason.

**I am more capable than other people.**

I am much like everybody else.

---

*For each pair of statements, the narcissistic option is in bold.*

## Appendix B

## Machiavellianism IV Scale

Please indicate the extent to which you agree/disagree with each statement, using the following scale:

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

- Never tell anyone the real reason you did something unless it is useful to do so.
- The best way to handle people is to tell them what they want to hear.
- One should take action only when sure it is morally right.\*
- Most people are basically good and kind.\*
- It is safest to assume that all people have a vicious streak and it will come out when they are given a chance.
- Honesty is the best policy in all cases.\*
- There is no excuse for lying to someone else.\*
- Generally speaking, people won't work hard unless they're forced to do so.
- All in all, it is better to be humble and honest than to be important and dishonest.\*
- When you ask someone to do something for you, it is best to give the real reasons for wanting it rather than giving reasons which carry more weight.\*
- Most people who get ahead in the world lead clean, moral lives.\*
- Anyone who completely trusts anyone else is asking for trouble.
- The biggest difference between most criminals and other people is that the criminals are stupid enough to get caught.
- Most people are brave.\*
- It is wise to flatter important people.
- It is possible to be good in all respects.\*
- P.T. Barnum was wrong when he said that there's a sucker born every minute.\*
- It is hard to get ahead without cutting corners here and there.
- People suffering from incurable diseases should have the choice of being put painlessly to death.
- Most people forget more easily the death of their father than the loss of their property.

---

\*Reverse scored

## Appendix C

## Mini-IPIP Scales

Please use the rating scale below to describe how accurately each statement describes you.

Very Inaccurate	Moderately Inaccurate	Neither Inaccurate nor Accurate	Moderately Accurate	Very Accurate
1	2	3	4	5

**Extraversion**

- Am the life of the party.
- Keep in the background.\*
- Don't talk a lot.\*
- Talk to a lot of different people at parties.

**Openness to Experience**

- Have difficulty understanding abstract ideas.\*
- Have a vivid imagination.
- Am not interested in abstract ideas.\*
- Do not have a good imagination.\*

**Emotional Stability**

- Am relaxed most of the time.
- Seldom feel blue.
- Get upset easily.\*
- Have frequent mood swings.\*

**Conscientiousness**

- Get chores done right away.
- Like order.
- Make a mess of things.\*
- Often forget to put things back in their proper place.\*

**Agreeableness**

- Sympathize with others' feelings.
- Feel others' emotions.
- Am not really interested in others.\*
- Am not interested in other people's problems.\*

---

\*Reverse scored

## Appendix D

## Perceived Leader Integrity Scale (PLIS)

**For each item below, indicate how well the item describes the manager you are rating:**

<b>Not at all</b>	<b>Barely</b>	<b>Somewhat</b>	<b>Well</b>
<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>

Would lie to me.

Would allow someone else to be blamed for his/her mistake.

Would falsify records.

Is vindictive.

Would deliberately distort what other people say.

Would make trouble for someone who got on his/her bad side.

Would try to take credit for other people's ideas.

Would do things that violate organizational policy and then expect others to cover for him/her.

## Appendix E

## Destructive Leadership Questionnaire (DLQ)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	<b>Slightly Disagree</b>	<b>Slightly Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>99</b>

**Managerial Ineffectiveness (MI)**

- My boss is not a very good coalition builder.
- My boss is not very good at inspiring others.
- My boss is very ineffective in persuading others.
- My boss has difficulty mobilizing the efforts of others.
- My boss has no idea what it takes to motivate subordinates.

**Interpersonal Harshness (IH)**

- My boss places brutal pressure on subordinates.
- My boss is a tyrant.
- Anyone who challenges my boss is dealt with brutally.
- My boss seems to have huge mood swings.
- My boss has personal favourites.

**Laissez-Faire Management (LF)**

- I often have to guess what my boss really expects of me.
- I rarely know what my boss thinks of my work.
- My boss often fails to monitor the actions of others.
- My boss is often careless when dealing with situations.
- My boss does NOT have a clue what is going on in our business unit.

**Indecisiveness/Inaction (II)**

- In an ambiguous situation, my boss has great difficulty making a decision.
- My boss is unable to take a stand and stick to it.
- My boss is afraid to take action when action is required.
- My boss has a difficult time dealing with change.
- My boss avoids having to use new technology.

Appendix F

Thesis Proposal

Relations Among Leader Personality Traits and Followers' Perceptions of  
Destructive Leadership

by  
Courtney G. Williams

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of  
North Carolina State University  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Science

Psychology

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2013

APPROVED BY:

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Chair of Advisory Committee

## Relations Among Leader Personality Traits and Followers'

### Perceptions of Destructive Leadership

Leaders occupy a central role in organizations, and as such, the study of leadership is a critical part of understanding organizational performance. Broadly speaking, leadership has been defined as a process that takes place within organizations, where organizations are conceptualized as systematic structures that exist to organize and direct collective effort (Craig & Kaiser, 2011; Kaiser, Hogan, & Craig, 2008).

### **Defining Leadership**

Kaiser and Hogan (2010) describe two dominant perspectives on leadership. One view of leadership is that of a formally defined position. This view assumes that if someone is in charge of something, that person is therefore a leader. Alternately, leadership may be considered from a human evolutionary standpoint, as a mechanism that evolved over time to influence individuals to forego their individual interests in favor of coordinating collective effort for the long-term welfare of the group. From this view, leadership is a resource for group survival (Kaiser & Hogan, 2010). Based on this evolutionary standpoint, it follows that modern organizations continue to have leaders because such organizations have, over time, proved to be more successful than those without them.

Using this evolutionary perspective, leadership may be assessed by measuring group (i.e., organizational) outcomes that are critical for the success of the organization. In other words, the *effectiveness* of the leader can be defined as the extent to which the leader helps the organization achieve its collective goals. From a practical standpoint, this means that

leader effectiveness may be characterized as the performance of the leader's group or team (Craig & Kaiser, 2011).

### **Leader Effectiveness**

So the question must be posed: what can leaders do to influence group performance? There are likely to be as many answers to this question as there are researchers and practitioners in the field of leadership. But broadly speaking, it appears that leaders affect organizational outcomes via two channels: interpersonal influence and decision-making (Craig, 2008; Kaiser, Hogan, & Craig, 2008; Kaiser & Overfield, 2010). Craig and Kaiser (2011) describe leader decision-making as largely *intrapersonal*, because it is ultimately a process that occurs within a single individual. Conversely, the *interpersonal* influence channel includes leader behavior that directly affects the behavior of others.

### **The Bright Side of Leadership**

In many cases, as researchers have examined the types of leader behaviors that influence group performance, they have tended to do so through rose-colored glasses. Kaiser and Craig (in press) have argued that the academic study of leadership has demonstrated a positivity bias; in most cases, the concept of leadership has a positive connotation. Some have even gone so far as to suggest that Hitler cannot be considered a leader despite his ability to coordinate the collective efforts of a huge number of people in conducting horrific, devastating acts of violence and brutality (Burns, 2003). Consistent with this positivity bias, Cohen (2009) argued that business ethics and personal integrity were *necessary* (though perhaps not sufficient) for effective leadership.

Such an idealized view of leadership is consistent with the “bright side” approach, in which the focus is on factors that enhance leadership via their *presence* (Ashforth, 1994; Einarsen, Aasland, & Skogstad, 2007; Hogan & Hogan, 2001; Schmidt, 2008). Indeed, Kaiser and Craig (in press) note that the vast majority of the dominant theories in leadership—including most trait-based theories, leader competency models, leader behavior approaches, path-goal theory, leader-member exchange theory, charismatic leadership theory, and transformational leadership theory—fall into this category. Trait-based perspectives of leadership assume that leaders’ effectiveness is the result of their personal qualities, or traits (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002; Zaccaro, 2007). Similarly, leader competency models suggest that skill competencies (e.g., financial analysis, customer interaction) predict both short- and long-term executive performance (Russell, 2001). Researchers involved in the Ohio State leadership studies concluded that there were two distinct aspects of leader performance, consideration and initiating structure, both of which enhance leadership effectiveness (e.g., Fleishman, 1953; Halpin & Winer, 1957). Similarly, researchers at the University of Michigan concluded that there were two general leadership orientations – employee orientation and production orientation – and the best leadership approach involved both (e.g., Katz, Maccoby, & Morse, 1950). In both of these leader behavior approaches, the underlying assumption is that there are certain universal behaviors associated with effective leaders, and more is better. In path-goal theory, a leader is effective to the extent that he is able to show followers how they can achieve their own goals by doing what the leader wants them to do (House, 1971; House, 1996), again, with “more” path-goal clarifying behavior

being better. In leader-member exchange (LMX) theory, leaders may achieve desired organizational outcomes by developing high quality relationships with their subordinates that are characterized by trust and mutual respect (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975; Graen & Schiemann, 1978). According to the model of charismatic leadership (Conger & Kanungo, 1987, 1998; Conger, 1989), charismatic leaders are effective to the extent that they are able to communicate an inspirational vision and promote followers' perceptions that they and their vision are extraordinary (Conger, Kanungo, & Menon, 2000). Similarly, according to transformational leadership theory, the most effective leaders motivate followers to go beyond their own self-interested goals to do more than originally anticipated and internalize the goals of the leader (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978). In emphasizing certain factors associated with effective leadership via their presence, these theories exemplify the bright side approach to leadership. Yet, despite its prevalence in extant literature, there is evidence to suggest that such an approach does not represent the full range of factors related to effective leadership. Thus, in order to capture the full spectrum of leadership, it is necessary to examine the dark side of leadership, as well.

### **The Dark Side of Leadership**

Thus far, we have focused on the bright side of leadership but have not clearly delineated it from the dark side of leadership. Hogan and Kaiser (2005) contend that it is necessary to distinguish between the two, since "good leadership promotes effective team and group performance... [whereas] bad leadership degrades the quality of life for everybody associated with it" (p. 169). In recent years, however, researchers have become increasingly

interested in examining the “dark side” of leadership, which focuses on the actively counterproductive factors that enhance leadership via their absence (Craig & Kaiser, 2011). This represents an important shift in the field. According to Craig and Kaiser, “there is a growing consensus in the field that dark side factors that undermine effective leadership are at least as important as traditional bright side factors to such outcomes as employee attitudes and organizational performance” (2011, p. 3).

Indeed, bad leadership can have widespread, deleterious effects on employees, organizations, and society at large. For instance, in the 2002 fiscal year alone, 354 U.S. business leaders were charged with some type of corporate fraud (Corporate Fraud Task Force, 2003). Furthermore, research suggests that corporate abuses likely cost U.S. organizations more than \$600 billion per year (Niehoff, 2003). Even so, there are varied opinions regarding just how prevalent destructive leaders are. Some suggest that highly publicized instances of corporate fraud and corruption (e.g., Enron) are anomalies and cannot be considered representative of the overall state of affairs. But, some researchers suggest that such instances are just the tip of the iceberg (Jennings, 2006; Sayles & Smith, 2006). Based on their review of the extant literature, Kaiser and Hogan (2010) estimate that the base rate for low integrity managers is most likely in the 10 to 20% range. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that no organization is immune to the risk posed by destructive leaders.

#### **Defining destructive leadership.**

One factor that may contribute to the varied opinions on the prevalence of destructive leadership is the lack of consensus regarding how destructive leadership should be defined.

As is the case in many areas of psychology (indeed, in research in general), different researchers have referred to the same phenomena using different names and have used the same names to mean different things (Craig & Kaiser, 2011). For instance, destructive leadership, as defined by Padilla, Hogan, and Kaiser (2007), requires leaders to be charismatic. But, Einarsen, Aasland, and Skogstad's (2007) definition of destructive leadership – appearing in the same journal issue – does not include this criterion (Craig & Kaiser, 2011). For the purposes of this study, destructive leadership will be defined as “systematic or repeated behavior by a leader, supervisor, or manager that knowingly violates, or inappropriately risks violating, the legitimate interest of the organization, its members, or other legitimate stakeholders by undermining or sabotaging the goals, tasks, resources, motivation, well-being, job satisfaction, or effectiveness of such stakeholders” (Craig & Kaiser, 2011, p. 8). This definition improves on earlier definitions proposed by Einarsen et al. (2007) and Padilla et al. (2007) in two important ways. First, it addresses the issue of intentionality, so as to distinguish it from other constructs such as managerial incompetence (Craig & Kaiser, 2011). Second, it considers stakeholders external to the organization, thereby allowing for the possibility that victims of destructive leadership may include legitimate external stakeholders, such as local community members (Craig & Kaiser, 2011).

Kaiser and Craig propose that destructive leadership may be considered a type of counterproductive work behavior (CWB), noting that their definition is “consistent with accepted definitions of CWB in its emphasis on harm to the legitimate interests of the organization and on intentionality of the actor” (in press, p. 7). What differentiates

destructive leadership from other forms of CWB, however, is the inclusion of “other legitimate stakeholders” as potential victims – an important expansion based on the unique responsibilities afforded to those in leadership roles (Kaiser & Craig, in press).

### **Measuring destructive leadership.**

Having established a conceptual definition, it may be useful to review how researchers have attempted to operationally define destructive leadership. Historically, this has presented some challenges to researchers. A common method by which integrity has been measured is via the use of competency ratings provided by subordinates. Kaiser and Hogan (2010) examined how subordinate ratings have been used to assess managers’ integrity and presented several points: 1) the integrity-related items reviewed only represented the positive end of the construct; 2) due to the low base rate of overt violations of integrity, subordinate ratings of integrity as a competency are unlikely to uncover those destructive leaders who merely have yet to be caught; and 3) ratings of integrity demonstrate significant negative skew (i.e., nearly all managers are rated highly) and this does not seem to provide an accurate picture of the true state of affairs. Based on their research, they offered two conclusions. First, due to the very nature of the construct of integrity, managers who are low in integrity are unlikely to rate themselves as such. Therefore, observer ratings should be more likely to pinpoint those with low integrity. Further, while managers may not often get caught in a destructive act, those who are likely to engage in such activities tend to exhibit cues consistent with unethical behavior, which are in turn used by subordinates as they form an impression of their manager. Subordinates’ impressions of their managers then affect their

interactions with them. Thus, subordinates are likely to be the most useful source of information regarding their manager's integrity (Kaiser & Hogan, 2010).

In an effort to address the issues associated with using integrity competencies, Craig and Gustafson (1998) developed the Perceived Leader Integrity Scale (PLIS). This measure improves on competency ratings in that it focuses on the low end of the integrity continuum. Further, rather than using ratings of observed behavior, subordinates are asked to estimate the likelihood that their leader will engage in unethical behaviors. In essence, the PLIS is uniquely capable of capturing leaders' *reputations* for integrity, i.e., how others think of them (Hogan, 2007). Reputation refers to the collective impressions that individuals make on others and reflects one of two ways in which MacKinnon (1944) believed personality should be defined. The other way is by factors internal to individuals that explain their behavior. Hogan (2007) refers to this as their *identity*. Having outlined the merits of assessing leader integrity using measures reflective of their reputation, it may be useful at this point to examine the role that leader identity plays in destructive leadership.

### **Leadership and Personality**

As previously discussed, destructive leadership has broad-reaching, negative effects on employees, organizations, and society. Thus, from a scientist-practitioner standpoint, it stands to reason that an in-depth, empirical examination of the antecedents of destructive leadership would likely be a fruitful area of research. In their review of the destructive leadership literature, Padilla et al. (2007) assert that destructive leadership results from the interaction between personality configurations and environmental factors. They refer to these

factors as the “toxic triangle,” which comprises characteristics of leaders, followers, and the environment that are associated with destructive leadership (Padilla et al., 2007). While the current proposal focuses on leader characteristics, it is worth noting that these factors do not exert their effects in a vacuum; rather, they operate in concert with one another and with the environment.

Having established that there are multi-level factors associated with destructive leadership, the relative weight carried by leader personality should not be discounted. Indeed, Hogan and Kaiser (2005) contend that, “personality predicts leadership – who we are is how we lead” (p. 169). Their conclusion is consistent with the findings of a meta-analysis conducted by Judge, Bono, Ilies, and Gerhardt (2002), in which the authors examined the relationship between personality and leadership in 78 studies. They found that all five dimensions of the five-factor model (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness) were correlated with overall leadership, which included both emergence and effectiveness.

Thus far, evidence to support the link between personality and leadership has primarily focused on the bright side of leadership. Kaiser and Hogan (2007) offer an exception to this trend and provide several additional conclusions about leader personality that may be more relevant to destructive leadership. They argue that personality flaws shape leader judgment, which may result in poor decision-making, coworker alienation, and team destabilization. They further suggest that leader personality becomes increasingly consequential as leaders move up in a hierarchy, because there is more freedom of choice

(discretion) and more at stake due to individuals' decisions having more far-reaching consequences (Kaiser & Hogan, 2007). Indeed, Kaiser and Hogan argue that, "the dark side is the key to understanding managerial failure" (2007, p. 183). Hogan and Hogan (1997) suggested that personality disorders (DSM-IV; American Psychiatric Association, 1994) offer a useful taxonomy of the most significant determinants of managerial failure. Further, they contend that leaders' dark side tendencies may be considered extensions of the Big Five (Hogan & Hogan, 1997).

As evidenced by the preceding section, discussions of the link between personality traits and destructive leadership have been largely theoretical, with few empirical studies examining this link, and even fewer that do so in an organizational setting. An overview of what is known about these antecedents—with empirical evidence where available—follows.

**Narcissism.** One personality construct that has been consistently linked to destructive leadership is narcissism (e.g., Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Hogan, Raskin, & Fazzini, 1990; House & Howell, 1992; Kets de Vries & Miller, 1985). Narcissism involves having an exaggerated sense of self-importance, fantasies of unlimited success and power, lack of empathy, exploitation of others, dominance, grandiosity, arrogance, entitlement, and the selfish pursuit of pleasure (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2000; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). Padilla et al. (2007) include narcissism as one of the elements in their "toxic triangle." Indeed, there is a substantial body of research that provides evidence to suggest that narcissism is correlated with destructive leadership (e.g., Conger, 1990; Hogan et al., 1990; House & Howell, 1992; Maccoby, 2000; O'Connor, Mumford, Clifton, Gessner,

& Connelly, 1995; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006; Sankowsky, 1995). Researchers have demonstrated that narcissistic leaders are self-absorbed and tend to discount or ignore others' viewpoints and well-being (Conger & Kanungo, 1998). They frequently demand unwavering obedience (O'Connor et al., 1995) and their sense of self-importance and entitlement can lead to abuses of power (Conger, 1990; Maccoby, 2000; Sankowsky, 1995). Narcissism has also been associated with poor judgment in business decision-making (e.g., firm acquisition choices and overpayment; Hayward & Hambrick, 1997; Malmendier & Tate, 2005).

While there is a substantial body of literature regarding narcissism and its relationship to destructive leadership, most of it consists of theoretical articles. Further, of the empirical research that has been conducted in this area, virtually none of it has examined this relationship within an organizational setting. One notable exception to this is a research study conducted by Blair, Hoffman, and Helland (2008). Based on multisource ratings provided for 154 managers representing a variety of industries, the researchers found that narcissism was negatively related to supervisory ratings of integrity. Interestingly, narcissism was found to be unrelated to subordinate ratings of integrity. However, it is worth noting that integrity was measured using five items on an evaluation scale, which were designed to examine the degree to which the leader engaged in certain behaviors (e.g., "Does not misrepresent him/herself for personal gain"), according to the rater. As previously discussed, this type of measure may not provide a comprehensive, accurate picture of destructive leadership, primarily because overt and observable counterproductive behavior

has a very low base rate, and because most violations are only discovered after the fact (Kaiser & Hogan, 2010).

**Machiavellianism.** Machiavellianism is a personality trait named after Niccolò Machiavelli, who wrote *The Prince* in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In providing political advice to leaders, he famously argued that the ends always justify the means. Consequently, he advises leaders to lie, manipulate, and coerce followers toward a goal that ultimately equates to personalized power for the leader (Judge et al., 2009; Deluga, 2001). In modern terms, Machiavellianism is defined as “cunning, manipulation and the use of any means necessary to achieve one’s political ends” (Judge et al., 2009, p. 867). Leaders high in Machiavellianism tend to be politically oriented, seek to exert control over their followers, and display a lack of affect in interpersonal relationships (McHoskey, 1999; Deluga, 2001). Because they also tend to be highly capable of influencing others, these leaders can typically convince others to do things for the leader’s own benefit, thus demonstrating clear abuses of power. For our purposes, the most problematic aspect of Machiavellianism may be that these leaders are unlikely to adhere to organizational procedures, or ethical and moral standards, in favor of behaving in ways to maximize their own power (Judge et al., 2009).

**Extraversion.** Extraversion is one dimension of the five-factor model of personality and represents the degree to which an individual is sociable, assertive, active, and energetic (Judge et al., 2002). Excessive extraversion may be characterized by behavior that is bold, aggressive, and grandiose (Judge, Piccolo, & Kosalka, 2009). These individuals prefer the spotlight and are likely to give themselves (and their abilities) more credit than they deserve

(Hogan & Hogan, 2001). Consequently, leaders who exhibit high levels of extraversion may be less likely to seek input from colleagues, which may result in alienation (Judge et al., 2009). Further, because extraverts typically have a high need for stimulation, they are more likely to exhibit transient enthusiasm for projects, people, and ideas (Beauducel, Brocke, & Leue, 2006). This may result in hasty or ill-advised decision-making (e.g., in aggressive pursuit of acquisitions/investments), and later, change in course if the returns on their investments do not measure up to their bold and aggressive expectations (Judge et al., 2009).

**Openness to experience.** Another dimension of the Big Five, openness to experience reflects the degree to which individuals are imaginative, unconventional, and autonomous (Judge et al., 2002). Individuals who score high on measures of openness have been characterized as nonconforming, priding themselves on their anti-authoritarian and anti-establishment attitudes (McCrae, 1996). Individuals who are very high on openness are considered to be a potential hazard in conventional, hierarchical organizations (Judge & LePine, 2007). High openness leaders tend to be more willing to employ almost any strategy or technique if they believe it increases the likelihood of organizational success (Judge et al., 2009). Similar to highly extraverted leaders, leaders high in openness may be easily distracted by new, unconventional ideas. Consequently they may be more likely to use short-term fixes that challenge traditional, deeply held organizational values. In doing so, they place the stability of the organization at risk (Judge et al., 2009).

**Emotional stability.** A third dimension of the Big Five, emotional stability (low neuroticism) reflects the degree to which individuals are confident, secure, and steady (Judge

& Bono, 2001). Leaders high in emotional stability tend to be seen as reserved, laid-back, even leisurely (Goldberg, 1999). Given that the interpersonal component of leadership is inherently an emotional process (Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002), genuine emotional displays are likely to increase a leader's credibility among his followers (Kouzes & Posner, 2003). Conversely, excessively high levels of emotional stability – marked by steady, even-keeled composure - may be interpreted as apathy. Leaders high in emotional stability may suppress their true evaluations of their employees and offer minimal feedback. Thus, these leaders may impede employees who rely on feedback and supervisor interactions (Judge et al., 2009).

**Conscientiousness.** Another dimension of the Big Five, conscientiousness is characterized by individuals' tendency to be efficient, detail-oriented, deliberate, and demonstrate a strong sense of direction in pursuit of their goals (Costa & McRae, 1992). At high levels of conscientiousness, individuals may be overly cautious and analytical, and as a result, may delay critical decision-making and be less likely to incorporate innovative or risky strategies (Hogan & Hogan, 2001). In excess, conscientiousness may manifest itself as perfectionism and inflexibility. As a result, leaders who are very high in conscientiousness may be overly critical of subordinates' performance (Hogan & Hogan, 2001).

**Agreeableness.** The last dimension of the Big Five, agreeableness is marked by modesty, altruism, and trustworthiness (Costa & McRae, 1992). Leaders who are high in agreeableness tend to avoid interpersonal conflict (Graziano, Jensen-Campbell, & Hair, 1996) and may be overly sensitive to the needs of others around them. This may lead to

avoidance in difficult decision-making situations. Highly agreeable leaders are more likely to demonstrate leniency in their performance ratings (Bernardin, Cooke, & Villanova, 2000). As discussed in regards to integrity assessment issues, such appraisals likely skew rating distributions, such that a disproportionate number of employees receive high performance ratings. At an extreme, such skew has the potential to put the organization at risk for wrongful termination accusations made by employees who received less-than-accurate performance appraisals (Judge & LePine, 2007).

Thus, while there is evidence to suggest a relationship between each of these personality traits and destructive leadership, the vast majority of the work done in this area has been theoretical in nature. While Blair et al. (2008) did conduct an empirical study examining the association between narcissism and supervisory ratings of integrity, these ratings – based only on observed behavior – are unlikely to have captured the full spectrum of destructive leadership. In regards to the remaining personality traits discussed in the previous section, the proposed theoretical relationships with destructive leadership have yet to be tested empirically.

### **The Current Study**

Having established the relevance of studying destructive leadership and demonstrating the gaps that exist in the extant literature, I propose to conduct an empirical study examining the link between leader personality traits and destructive leadership. The purpose of the proposed study is to contribute to our understanding of the antecedents of destructive leadership by providing empirical data to elucidate these relationships.

The previous research finding that narcissism is negatively related to supervisor ratings (and has no correlation with subordinate ratings) was based on rater assessments of low integrity behavior in their leader (Blair et al., 2008). Given that minor breaches of integrity (e.g., neglecting commitments, withholding information) may be perceived as honest mistakes rather than moral violations while major violations of integrity are usually covert (Kaiser & Hogan, 2010), ratings of observed behavior regarding violations of integrity would be expected to be lower than the true rate at which these violations occur. Thus, the current study will address the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1.** Leader narcissism will be positively related to destructive leadership.

While empirical research regarding Machiavellianism and destructive leadership is limited, theoretical work provides a strong argument in support of this link. In essence, leaders high in Machiavellianism consider their own desire for power and control above the interests of their followers. At a conceptual level, there is a clear link between this trait and destructive leadership as defined for the purposes of this study. Thus, the current study seeks to test the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 2.** Leader Machiavellianism will be positively related to destructive leadership.

Based on theory postulated by Judge et al. (2009) regarding the dark side of extraversion, highly extraverted leaders may be more likely to act on poor judgment and make ill-advised decisions regarding acquisitions and return on their investments. Similar to highly extraverted leaders, leaders who exhibit high levels of openness to experience may be

easily distracted by unconventional ideas and may be more likely to use short-term fixes that challenge traditional, deeply held organizational values, placing the organization at risk (Judge et al., 2009). Thus, the current study will test the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 3.** Leader extraversion will be positively related to destructive leadership.

**Hypothesis 4.** Leader openness will be positively related to destructive leadership.

Personality-based integrity tests that are frequently used during the employment screening process do not actually measure integrity directly; instead, they assess a combination of three dimensions of the Big Five (emotional stability, conscientiousness, and agreeableness) that reflect socialization (Hogan & Ones, 1997). Thus, these three dimensions would be expected to correlate negatively with destructive leadership. However, based on the theoretical rationale previously discussed, it may be the case that at very high levels of these dimensions, leaders become more likely to engage in destructive behaviors. In an effort to better understand the nature of these relationships, the current study will address the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 5.** Leader emotional stability and destructive leadership will have a non-linear relationship, such that both very low levels and very high levels of emotional stability will be associated with destructive leadership.

**Hypothesis 6.** Leader conscientiousness and destructive leadership will have a non-linear relationship, such that both very low levels and very high levels of conscientiousness will be associated with destructive leadership.

**Hypothesis 7.** Leader agreeableness and destructive leadership will have a non-linear relationship, such that both very low levels and very high levels of agreeableness will be associated with destructive leadership.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Study participants will consist of employees recruited from hierarchically-structured organizations. The total sample will include both leaders and their subordinates, with at least half of the sample being subordinates (as more than one subordinate per leader may participate). Leaders and subordinates will only be considered eligible for inclusion in the study provided they meet certain criteria: 1) they have worked together for at least six months; and 2) the subordinate directly reports to the leader. These criteria exist in order to ensure that the subordinate has had sufficient time and depth of interaction to form an impression of the leader.

### **Procedure**

Organizations invited to participate will be identified using available databases (e.g., Chambers of Commerce, Hoover's) and researcher contacts. The researcher will contact human resources personnel and/or other decision-makers in the organization via e-mail to provide a brief overview of the research study, including the anticipated amount of time involved, in addition to possible risks and benefits. Provided that the organization's representative agrees, the researcher will request contact information for leaders in the organization. The researcher will contact leaders via e-mail to provide them with a brief

overview of the research study and ask if they would be willing to participate. Leaders who agree to participate will be sent a link to an online survey site that contains the informed consent and survey items, as detailed below.

Prior to participating in any study-related activities, potential participants (leaders and subordinates) will be asked to read and sign an informed consent outlining the general purpose of the study, the tasks involved, the expected time commitment, and any anticipated risks and benefits of participation. All participants will be assured that their ratings and responses will remain confidential. Minimal identifying information will be retained in order to link leader and subordinate assessments.

Leader participants will be asked to respond to items related to demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, race/ethnicity, job title, time in current role, and time in organization). Then, they will be asked to complete personality measures on narcissism, Machiavellianism, extraversion, openness to experience, emotional stability, conscientiousness, and agreeableness (described below). Leader participants will also be asked to provide contact information for at least one direct report subordinate with whom they have worked for at least six months.

Potential subordinate participants will be contacted and given a general overview of the study. Those who agree to participate will be sent a link to the survey site that contains the informed consent and survey items, as detailed below. Subordinate participants will be asked to complete the Perceived Leader Integrity Scale (PLIS; Craig & Gustafson, 1998) and

the Destructive Leadership Questionnaire (DLQ; Shaw, Erickson, & Harvey, 2011), described in further detail below.

## **Measures**

**Narcissistic personality inventory.** Narcissism data for leaders will be collected using a self-report measure consisting of items from the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1988). The NPI was developed based on DSM-III criteria to assess for the presence of narcissistic personality disorder. The modified version is a 34-item scale that measures six facets of narcissism: authority, exhibitionism, superiority, entitlement, exploitativeness, and self-sufficiency (Galvin, Waldman, & Balthazard, 2010; Kubarych, Deary, & Austin, 2004). Items for this scale are reported in Appendix A. Items are rated using a seven-point Likert type response format ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). Sample items include, “I like to be the center of attention,” “I always know what I am doing,” and “I am an extraordinary person.” Cronbach’s alpha has demonstrated acceptable internal consistency of .86 (Galvin et al., 2010).

**Machiavellianism IV scale.** The 20-item, self-report Machiavellianism IV Scale (Mach IV; Christie & Geis, 1970) will be used to assess Machiavellianism in leaders. The scale was developed in congruence with statements from Machiavelli’s *The Prince* and *Discourses* (Christie, 1970). Items for this scale are reported in Appendix B. Sample items include, “Never tell anyone the real reason you did something unless it is useful to do so,” “The best way to handle people is to tell them what they want to hear,” and “There is no excuse for lying to someone” (reverse scored). Items are rated using a seven-point Likert

type response format ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). The Mach IV is the most widely used scale to assess Machiavellianism and has demonstrated a Cronbach’s alpha of .85 (Deluga, 2001).

**Big Five personality inventory.** The Big Five factors of personality (extraversion, openness to experience, emotional stability, conscientiousness, and agreeableness) will be assessed using the 50-item IPIP representation of the Goldberg (1999) markers for the Big Five factor structure. Each of the five factors is assessed using ten items, for a total of 50 self-report items.

**Extraversion.** The extraversion scale assesses the extent to which individuals are sociable, assertive and active. Items for this scale are presented in Appendix C. Participants are asked to rate the extent to which each item describes them. Sample items include, “Start conversations,” “Talk to a lot of different people at parties,” and “Have little to say” (reverse scored). Items are rated using a seven-point Likert type response format ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). Internal consistency for this measure is acceptable, with a Cronbach’s alpha of .87 (Donnellan, Oswald, Baird, & Lucas, 2006).

**Openness to experience.** The openness (or “intellect”) scale assesses the extent to which individuals are imaginative, autonomous, and nonconformist. Items for this scale are available in Appendix D. Participants are asked to rate the extent to which each item describes them. Sample items include, “Have a vivid imagination,” “Spend time reflecting on things,” and “Am not interested in abstract ideas” (reverse scored). Items are rated using a seven-point Likert type response format ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7

(“strongly agree”). Internal consistency for this measure is acceptable, with a Cronbach’s alpha of .80 (Donnellan et al., 2006).

***Emotional stability.*** The emotional stability scale assesses the extent to which individuals are confident, secure, and steady. Items for this scale are reported in Appendix E. Participants are asked to rate the extent to which each item describes them. Sample items include, “Am relaxed most of the time,” “Get stressed out easily” (reverse scored), and “Change my mood a lot” (reverse scored). Items are rated using a seven-point Likert type response format ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). Internal consistency for this measure is acceptable, with a Cronbach’s alpha of .85 (Donnellan et al., 2006).

***Conscientiousness.*** The conscientiousness scale assesses the extent to which individuals are orderly, attentive to details, and deliberate in their actions. Items for this scale are reported in Appendix F. Participants are asked to rate the extent to which each item describes them. Sample items include, “Am always prepared,” “Am exacting in my work,” and “Shirk my duties” (reverse scored). Items are rated using a seven-point Likert type response format ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). Internal consistency for this measure is adequate, with a Cronbach’s alpha of .80 (Donnellan et al., 2006).

***Agreeableness.*** The agreeableness scale assesses the extent to which individuals are modest, empathetic, and concerned for others. Items for this scale are reported in Appendix G. Participants are asked to rate the extent to which each item describes them. Sample items

include, “Sympathize with others’ feelings,” “Take time out for others,” and “Am not really interested in others” (reverse scored). Items are rated using a seven-point Likert type response format ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). Internal consistency for this measure is acceptable, with a Cronbach’s alpha of .80 (Donnellan et al., 2006).

**Perceived leader integrity scale.** Subordinates’ perceptions of the likelihood of their leaders engaging in destructive leader behavior will be assessed using the short version of Craig and Gustafson’s (1998) Perceived Leader Integrity Scale (PLIS). The full version of the PLIS contains 31 items reflecting both character (e.g., “is vindictive”) and bad conduct (e.g., always gets even”). Most of the items ask observers (i.e., subordinates) to rate the likelihood that their leaders would engage in a particular unethical behavior (Kaiser & Hogan, 2010). The PLIS is based on the premise that destructive leadership is not just the absence of high integrity behavior but involves “actively devious, manipulative, and dishonest behavior” (Craig & Kaiser, 2011, p. 13). Subordinate participants will complete a short (eight-item) version of the PLIS (see Appendix H). They will rate their leader on a four-point Likert type response format representing the degree to which each item describes the leader, ranging from 1 (“not at all”) to 4 (“exactly”). This version of the PLIS has demonstrated acceptable internal consistency, with a Cronbach’s alpha of .93.

**Destructive leadership questionnaire.** The Destructive Leadership Questionnaire (DLQ; Shaw et al., 2011) was developed in congruence with Einarsen et al.’s (2007) conceptualization of destructive leadership, which they defined as the “systematic and

repeated behavior by a leader, supervisor, or manager that violates the legitimate interest of the organization by undermining and/or sabotaging the organization's goals, tasks, resources, and effectiveness and/or the motivation, well-being or job satisfaction of subordinates" (p. 208). Items for this scale are reported in Appendix I. In the DLQ, participants are asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with 127 items using a seven-point Likert type response format. Items assess subordinates' overall judgment of the supervisor (e.g., "My boss is a terrible boss to work for"), personal characteristics of the supervisor (e.g., "My boss is lazy"), and supervisor behavior (e.g., "My leader often takes credit for the work that others have done"). Like the PLIS, the DLQ defines destructive leadership in terms of subordinate perceptions. Since the DLQ is a new measure, it is being used in conjunction with the PLIS to examine how the two measures relate to one another and whether they demonstrate differential relationships with the antecedents of interest.

### **Proposed Analyses**

**Descriptive statistics.** The means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of all of the aforementioned variables will be calculated and presented in a table (see Table 1).

**Multiple regression.** The hypotheses will be tested using multiple regression analyses. The results of the regression analyses will be presented in a table (see Table 2). The criterion variable will be subordinate perceptions of destructive leadership, with leader narcissism, Machiavellianism, extraversion, openness, emotional stability, conscientiousness, and agreeableness as the predictors. The destructive leadership scales (PLIS and DLQ) will be analyzed separately, such that in one analysis, the PLIS will be regressed on all of the

predictor variables. In a second analysis, the DLQ will be regressed on all of the predictor variables.

Hypothesis 1 will be tested by regressing subordinate perceptions of destructive leadership on leader narcissism. If leader narcissism has a positive regression weight that is significant at the  $p < .05$  level, it will be considered a significant predictor of subordinate perceptions of destructive leadership and will thus provide support for Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 2 will be tested by regressing subordinate perceptions of destructive leadership on leader Machiavellianism. If leader Machiavellianism has a positive regression weight that is significant at the  $p < .05$  level, it will be considered a significant predictor of subordinate perceptions of destructive leadership and will thus provide support for Hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3 will be tested by regressing subordinate perceptions of destructive leadership on leader extraversion. If leader extraversion has a positive regression weight that is significant at the  $p < .05$  level, it will be considered a significant predictor of subordinate perceptions of destructive leadership and will thus provide support for Hypothesis 3.

Hypothesis 4 will be tested by regressing subordinate perceptions of destructive leadership on leader openness. If leader openness has a positive regression weight that is significant at the  $p < .05$  level, it will be considered a significant predictor of subordinate perceptions of destructive leadership and will thus provide support for Hypothesis 4.

Hypothesis 5 will be tested by regressing subordinate perceptions of destructive leadership on leader emotional stability squared. If leader emotional stability squared has a

positive regression weight that is significant at the  $p < .05$  level, it will indicate a significant curvilinear effect of emotional stability on subordinate perceptions of destructive leadership and will thus provide support for Hypothesis 5.

Hypothesis 6 will be tested by regressing subordinate perceptions of destructive leadership on leader conscientiousness squared. If leader conscientiousness squared has a positive regression weight that is significant at the  $p < .05$  level, it will indicate a significant curvilinear effect of conscientiousness on subordinate perceptions of destructive leadership and will thus provide support for Hypothesis 6.

Hypothesis 7 will be tested by regressing subordinate perceptions of destructive leadership on leader agreeableness squared. If leader agreeableness squared has a positive regression weight that is significant at the  $p < .05$  level, it will indicate a significant curvilinear effect of agreeableness on subordinate perceptions of destructive leadership and will thus provide support for Hypothesis 7.

### **Discussion**

Results of the proposed study will be considered in conjunction with the extant body of literature of destructive leadership. Strengths and limitations of the current study will be discussed and future empirical research questions will be offered. Consideration of the potential applicability of these findings to research, theory, and practice will be discussed, as well.

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Table 1

*Summary of Intercorrelations, Means, and Standard Deviations*

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
1. PLIS												
2. DLQ												
3. Narcissism												
4. Machiavellianism												
5. Extraversion												
6. Openness												
7. Emotional stability												
8. Conscientiousness												
9. Agreeableness												

*Note.* PLIS = Perceived Leader Integrity Scale; DLQ = Destructive Leadership Questionnaire.

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

Table 2

*Predictors of Subordinates' Perceptions of Destructive Leadership*

Variable	PLIS		DLQ	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE<sub>B</sub></i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE<sub>B</sub></i>
Narcissism				
Machiavellianism				
Extraversion				
Openness				
Emotional stability				
Emotional stability, squared				
Conscientiousness				
Conscientiousness, squared				
Agreeableness				
Agreeableness, squared				
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>				
<i>F</i>				

*Note.* N = XXX.

\**p* < .05, \*\**p* < .01.