

Situational Narcissism and Charismatic Leadership: A Conceptual Framework

John Humphreys
Texas A&M University – Commerce
Duan Zhao
HuaZhong Normal University
Kendra Ingram
Texas A&M University – Commerce
Joe Gladstone
New Mexico State University
Lloyd Basham
Texas A&M University - Commerce

ABSTRACT

While there are conceptual differences in personalized and socialized charismatic leadership, there is also evidence that contextual factors and aspects of personality are involved in the emergence of these compelling types of leader behavior. In this article we offer a conceptual framework of leader narcissistic disposition and emerging charismatic leadership patterns. In addition, we propose that a transcendent event may lead to a development sequence whereby an element of situational narcissism is initiated, ultimately creating the attribution of charismatic leadership form and outcomes outwardly inconsistent with initial leader motivations.

Introduction

While the literature is filled with articles extolling the benefits associated with charismatic leadership (Howell & Shamir, 2005), the proposals explaining the processes of charismatic emergence are limited. Specifically, the lack of insight as to why and when particular forms of charismatic influence might appear has left leadership scholars searching for greater understanding. The quest for such discernment has led researchers to examine the influence of context (e.g., Roberts & Bradley, 1988) and various attributes of core personality with respect to charismatic leader behaviors and motives (e.g., Jung & Sosik, 2006).

In particular, narcissism is an underlying personality characteristic that is thought to be related to charismatic leadership (House & Howell, 1992), most notably with the personalized form of charisma (Popper, 2002). Regrettably, due to a narrow scope (Judge, LePine, & Rich, 2006), much of this work has offered little in the way of a more psychologically integrated perspective. As a result, Rosenthal and Pittinsky (2006: 628) suggested the incorporation of the construct of narcissism, in conjunction with the interplay of leader motivations and situational influences, "... might be a particularly fruitful itinerary for future theory and research." Accordingly, we put forward a relative structure of narcissism and emerging charismatic leadership patterns.

Upon presenting our conceptual framework, we support our interpretation by examining the pertinent literature surrounding charisma and charismatic leadership, contextual influences, and the psychological components of narcissism. Finally, based upon our observations in relation to the literature, we clarify our conceptualization and discuss the implications arising from it.

A Comparative Framework of Narcissism and Emerging Charismatic Leadership

We suppose that few will dispute the notion of a noteworthy relationship between leader narcissism and charisma. As we will illustrate, the literature describes some association shared by these concepts. Theoretical integration and more nuanced descriptions of the interaction between narcissism, charisma, and situational determinants, however, are lacking (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). To that end, we offer our portrayal of narcissism and emerging charismatic leadership patterns (Figure 1).

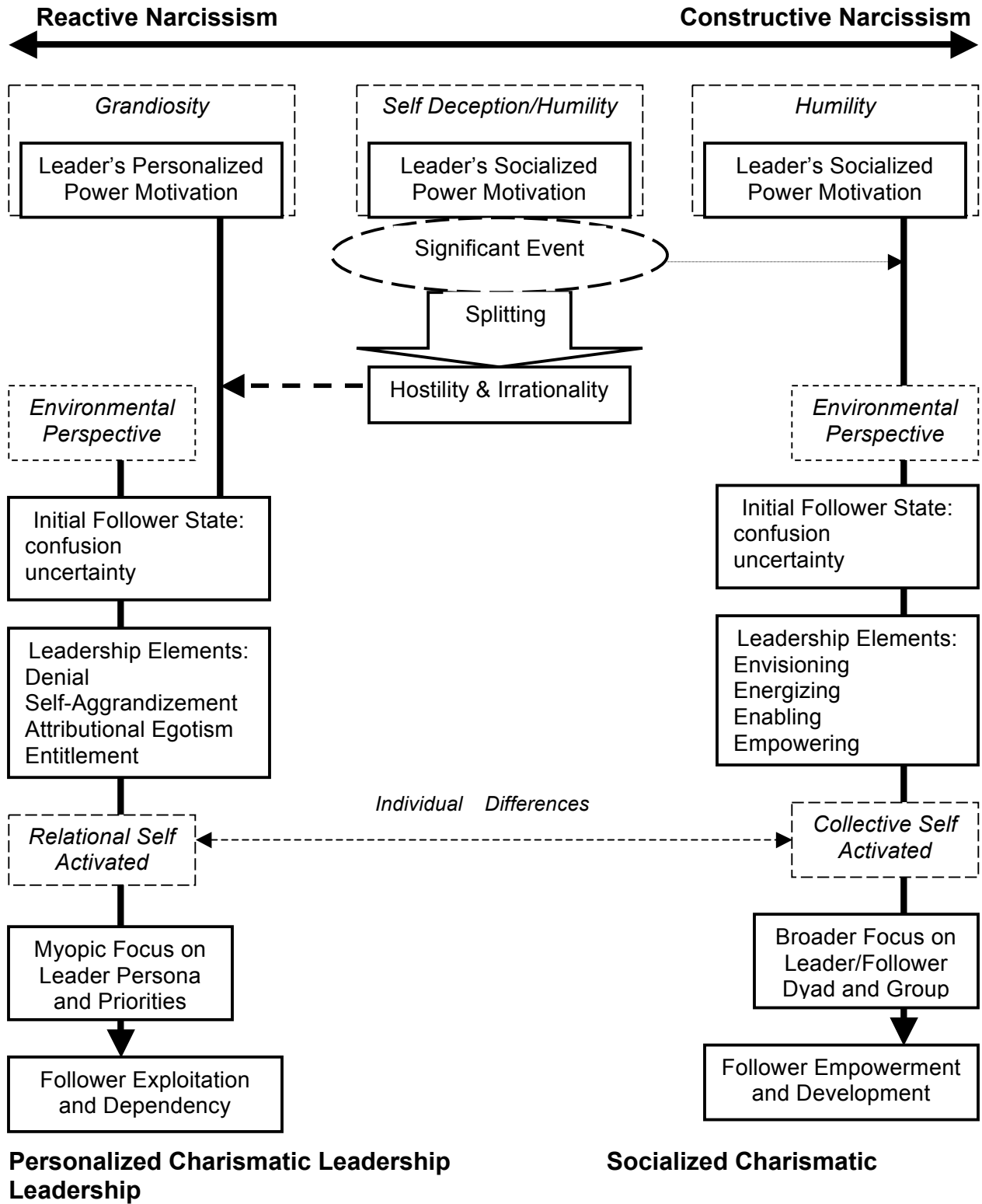
Charismatic Leadership

According to Humphreys, Pryor, Haden, and Oyler (2009), the construct of charisma principally appeared in the sociological works of Max Weber (Jacobsen & House, 2001). Weber (1947: 358-359) used the term charisma to label the remarkable influence that certain leaders held over followers by demonstrating "... a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities." He viewed charisma as an emergent social structure where radical vision and systemic change surfaced from an abrupt crisis (Beyer, 1999); such that followers would seek leaders they perceived as possessing exceptional gifts (The following foundation material on charismatic leadership is a brief synopsis of a small section of Humphreys et al., 2009, and presented with permission).

The current research concerning charismatic leadership, however, is much more based in psychological perceptions (see House, 1977) and focused on leader characteristics (e.g., Jung & Sosik, 2006) and behaviors used to affect followers by appealing to their self-concepts (Jacobsen & House, 2001). Moreover, based upon previous efforts (e.g., Howell & Shamir, 2005; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993), we agree that the specific activation of followers' self-concept within a charismatic association is likely a determinative factor in relation to the form of that relationship and "may be central to understanding the charismatic leadership process" (Howell & Shamir, 2005: 100).

Although at times presented as a fragile concept (Choi, 2006), charismatic leadership has become one of the dominant streams of leadership thought (Mumford, Antes, Caughron, & Friedrich, 2008). Numerous constructive outcomes have been associated with charismatic leadership (Conger & Kanungo, 1998), although researchers have also recognized the potential negatives of such extreme influence (Howell & Avolio, 1992). One thing we do know, however, is that there can be divergence in the course of charismatic influence, as House and Howell (1992) "distinguished socialized from personalized leaders" (Bedell, Hunter, Angie, & Vert, 2006: 53).

Figure 1. A Conceptual Framework of Narcissism and Emerging Charismatic Leadership Patterns



Personalized and Socialized Charismatic Leaders

The idea that charismatic leadership is discernable in personalized and socialized forms (e.g., Choi, 2006; House & Howell, 1992) is not new. This general dichotomy can be traced back to the writings of early philosophers (e.g., Plato, 1973). Personalized charismatic relationships are focused on followers' identification with the leader (Weierter, 1997), through activation of the relational self (Howell & Shamir, 2005), and generate feelings of empowerment for the leader but, eventually, detrimental consequences for followers (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). While compelling, such relationships can be "exploitive" and "self-aggrandizing" (Choi, 2006: 26).

Conversely, socialized charismatic relationships are thought to provide followers a means of expressing vital facets of their self-concepts within a shared context (Kark & Shamir, 2002) via the activation of the collective self and, as such, is considered a more developmental (Dvir, Eden, Avolio, & Shamir, 2002) and ethical (Brown & Trevino, 2006) approach to leadership. Howell and Shamir (2005: 100) offered:

Followers in this type of relationship derive their sense of direction and self-expression not from personal identification with the leader but from the leader's message. In this relationship followers place constraints on the leader's influence, play an active role in determining the values expressed by the leader, are less dependent on the leader, and are less open to manipulation by the leader.

Due to this lack of unhealthy dependence produced among followers, socialized charisma is considered non-exploitive and more focused on follower needs (Choi, 2006). This does not suggest socialized charismatic leadership is wanting with respect to acute influence, though, because followers often see the leader as a representative group member (Hogg, 2001) who embodies the group's identity (Kark & Shamir, 2002).

The activation of this "collective level of self" (Howell & Shamir, 2005: 100) among followers elevates the importance of situational factors in the charismatic relationship. In addition, Rosenthal and Pittinsky (2006) declared that any integrated representation of leadership must also consider leader motives along with situational dynamics. Kets de Vries and Miller (1985: 585) supported this line of reasoning previously by declaring:

Far richer characterizations of leadership are needed, those taking into consideration both its cognitive and affective dimensions. These are suggested by the psychoanalytic and psychiatric literature. Here, the "inner world" of leaders is analyzed and their personalities and characters are related to their behavior and situation. This, of course, is a time-honored practice among many historians and biographers. Research that aims to decipher intrapsychic thought processes and resulting actions thus involves the study of "psycho-political drama" (Zaleznik & Kets de Vries, 1975) that relates managerial personality both to role behavior and to the administrative setting.

Yet, a review of the psychological literature concerning leadership reveals limited research on personality variables that might give rise to varied patterns of leadership (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987; Popper, Mayseless, & Castelnovo, 2000). Along this line, Popper (2002: 798) alleged that we do not know how to appraise and gauge the differences between positive/inspiring and negative/destructive leaders and declared there is a need for more “conceptualization” of relevant personality concepts to fill this void, particularly those that might account for such differential styles. Specifically, this author, as well as others (e.g., Brown, 1997; Maccoby, 2000; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006) have suggested the value of narcissism in comprehending the emergence and trajectory of leader behavior and follower effects beyond the level of leader typology (Popper, 2002), as it is thought that narcissism is positively linked at the very least to the attainment of positions of leadership (Maccoby, 2000) and likely with other leadership effects (e.g., Raskin & Terry, 1988; Sankowsky, 1995). According to Kets de Vries and Miller (1985: 586), “If there is one personality constellation to which leaders tend to gravitate it is the narcissistic one.”

Narcissism

Analogous to the evolution of the term charisma, the conception of narcissism has also undergone transformation in meaning since Freud’s initial, albeit inconsistent, thoughts on the subject (Cooper, 1986; Goren, 1995). Although Freud (1914) is often credited with the original notion, it was Ellis (1898) who coined the term (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006).

Based upon the story of Narcissus from Greek mythology, who perished because of his extreme vanity (Lubit, 2002), psychologists of the day (1800s) defined narcissism as “a personal form of admiration” (King, 2007: 184) or “perverse self-love” (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006: 618). This early work led Freud to examine the personality and behavioral characteristics of narcissists (Raskin & Terry, 1988) which, in turn, encouraged Horney (1939) to speculate on diverse antecedents of Freud’s observations. Whereas Freud (1931) did suggest there was a specific narcissistic personality type, it was the works of Kohut (1966) and Kernberg (1967) that advanced narcissism as a true personality disorder (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). According to Kernberg (1985: 17), individuals with a pathological narcissistic personality:

... present an unusual degree of self-reference in their interactions with other people, a great need to be loved and admired by others, and ... a very inflated concept of themselves and an inordinate need for tribute from others. ... In general, their relationships with other people are clearly exploitative and sometimes parasitic. It is as if they feel they have the right to control and possess others and to exploit them with no guilt feelings ...

“Today, we use the term narcissism to describe a pervasive pattern of overt grandiosity, self-focus, and self importance behavior, displayed by an individual or group of individuals (American Psychiatric Association, 2000)” (King, 2007: 184).

According to the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV)* (APA, 2000), there are nine indicative criteria related to the pathological narcissistic personality: 1) grandiose sense of self-importance, 2) preoccupation with fantasies of unlimited success and/or power, 3) belief in unique status, 4) need for excessive admiration, 5) unreasonable sense of entitlement, 6) conscious exploitation of others, 7) lack of empathy, 8) envious of others, and 9) arrogant behavior directed towards others. To qualify for a diagnosis of Narcissistic Personality Disorder, an individual must exhibit at least five of these criteria in multiple contexts (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006).

Rosenthal and Pittinsky (2006), however, suggested such an explicit focus on the pathological view of narcissism omits critical matters that are relevant to the discussion of narcissism and leadership. First, these authors noted that while hostility is excluded from this conceptualization of narcissism, although it is mentioned in the APA verbiage, this factor can create considerable difficulty in a leadership context. "Second, and especially pertinent, Freud's and Kohut's idea that narcissism is a healthy and essential process in normal development is abandoned in favor of the idea that narcissism reflects purely pathological processes, foreshadowing the debate about whether narcissism is a net positive or negative leader attribute" (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006: 619), elevating the issue of dimensionality versus categorization.

While Kraepelin (1917: 295) is acclaimed for the taxonomy of manifest pathologies, even he conceded that "whenever we try to mark out the frontier between mental health and disease, we find a neutral territory, in which the imperceptible change from the realm of normal life to that of obvious derangement takes place." True, as the most common diagnosis in practice is the "not-other-wise-specified" category. As a result, the 2012 update of the *DSM-IV* is seeking more of "a graded continuum between mental health and disease" (Monastersky, 2008: 2).

Similarly, echoing the concerns of Kendall (1975), Widiger and Coker (2003) advocated for dimensional classifications because there is little qualitative distinction from normal functioning. They addressed this condition specifically with narcissism supporting Jorstad's (1996: 18) avowal that, "It is not a question of either/or, but of the degree of narcissism." Still, what is evident is that the degree of narcissistic nature within the leader produces profound follower and organizational consequences (King, 2007).

Narcissism and Charismatic Leadership

"The contrast between the harmful impact that narcissistic leaders can have on their constituents and institutions and the fact that narcissism is a key trait of some of the world's most creative and generative leaders seems to suggest that the concepts being studied need to be refined" (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006: 628). Our views coincide, as leadership can be pathologically damaging or very motivating. "But what is it about leaders themselves that makes it so?" (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1985: 586). Kets de Vries and Miller (1985: 584) suggested that narcissism may be a fundamental element,

asserting that "... leadership effectiveness and dysfunction can often be explained by the narcissistic dispositions."

More significantly, these authors advanced the discussion by proclaiming that the quality and intensity of a leader's narcissistic characteristics and propensity likely plays a large role in leader efficacy and perception. They (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1985: 588) emphasized:

... that these characteristics occur with different degrees of intensity. A certain dose of narcissism is necessary to function effectively. We all show signs of narcissistic behavior. Among individuals who possess only limited narcissistic tendencies, we find those who are very talented and capable of making great contributions to society. Those who gravitate to the extremes, however, give narcissism its pejorative reputation.

This may be particularly true with respect to charismatic influence (Conger & Kanungo, 1998).

This makes intuitive sense because charismatic leaders demonstrate the "ability to reawaken primitive emotions in their followers" (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1985: 585). In addition, there is a modicum of evidence indicating that leader narcissism may serve as a distinguishing variable of socialized versus personalized charisma and appears to be related most specifically to the manifestation of personalized charismatic leadership (Mumford, Gessner, Connelly, O'Connor, & Clifton, 1993; Popper, 2002).

For example, O'Connor, Mumford, Clifton, Gessner, and Connelly (1995) analyzed eighty 20th Century leaders and determined that personalized and socialized charismatic leaders could be differentiated based on the leader's manifestation of several characteristics, one of which was narcissism. Based upon these and other (e.g., House & Howell, 1992; Raskin & Terry, 1988) findings, as well as his own empirical work indicating a significant positive correlation between narcissism and the personalized form of charisma, Popper (2002: 799) asserted "... that narcissism is a core personality aspect that can not only serve as an integrative variable representing most of the aspects attributed to the differences between personalized charismatic leaders (PCL) and socialized charismatic leaders (SCL), but can also serve as measurable criterion for classifying leaders into personalized and socialized charismatic leaders."

Furthermore, House and Howell (1992) proclaimed that narcissistic leaders tended to habitually exhibit personalized charismatic behaviors. In critiquing their work, though, Rosenthal and Pittinsky (2006: 628) posed a stimulating question. "Are there leaders who are similar in their drives, methods, and outcomes, but differ in that some are driven to act because of stable egocentric personality traits (i.e., narcissistic leaders), whereas others are driven by situational factors to become egocentric (i.e., personalized charismatic leaders)?" Extending this course, might certain situational events actually alter a leader's power motivation within a narcissistic continuum to influence the

emergence of certain charismatic patterns? We think so and have attempted to build upon their (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006: 630) review and move away from “a good vs. bad debate about narcissistic leader traits” to an understanding of the “dynamics between leaders’ psychological motivations and behaviors” and those of their followers to offer a more integrative and situational conceptualization of narcissism and charismatic leader emergence. Moreover, we think this idea lends itself to the sort of psychologically integrated structure of leader motivations, narcissistic delineation, situational influences, and charismatic leadership emergence called for by those seeking richer discernment of these elements (e.g., Popper, 2002; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006).

An Integrated Framework of Narcissism and Charismatic Leadership

We commence with the basic idea put forth by Howell and Shamir (2005: 99) that the charismatic leadership process is “the process through which the charismatic relationship is created and maintained.” Also, we presume the research findings supporting the relationship between narcissism and charismatic leadership, principally the personalized form (Popper, 2002), and espouse Rosenthal and Pittinsky’s (2006: 629) definition that, “Narcissistic leadership occurs when leaders’ actions are principally motivated by their own egomaniacal needs and beliefs, superseding the needs and interests of the constituents and institutions they lead.” From there, however, and echoing the thoughts of others (Widiger & Coker, 2003), we think the conversation concerning these relationships are too categorical, requiring a more dimensional presentation. Centered on this premise, we found the ideas of Kets de Vries and Miller (1985), who applied psychoanalytic object relations theory to narcissism and leadership, offered considerable substance that mandated inclusion in our construction.

‘Object relations’ generally refer to the accumulated perceptions that form one’s cognitive backdrop, that is, the mental map used to understand and interact with the external world. These psychic representations can profoundly influence affective states and are thought to sit at the “genesis of pathological narcissism” (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1985: 590). In addition, individual differences with respect to narcissistic tendencies can be measured in the normal population (Raskin & Hall, 1981). Building upon this insight, Kets de Vries and Miller (1985) proposed that the degree of leader narcissism could lead to differential styles of leadership and presented three narcissistic leader prototypes: reactive, self-deceptive, and constructive.

While it is not within our purpose to offer a complete description of the etiology of these illustrative types (see Kets de Vries and Miller, 1985), in the main, these authors suggested that leaders occupy different positions on a spectrum ranging from full blown, pathological narcissistic personality, which they labeled reactive narcissism, to healthy narcissism, most often identified in the literature as constructive (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1985), productive (Maccoby, 2000), or normal (Freud, 1914) narcissism. All leaders have some degree of narcissistic leaning derived from assurance of their personal worth, “an important element in ordinary people’s self esteem and self-confidence”

(Jorstad, 1996: 18), frequently generating an impression of dynamism and positive energy amongst followers (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1985).

Conversely, there are charismatic leaders who see themselves as so entitled and grandiose - even messianic (Kohut, 1971) - who are clearly pathological narcissists, meeting the criteria described earlier for clinical diagnoses of narcissistic personality disorder. These are the leaders who give meaning to the negative connotations associated with the term narcissism (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006), as they attempt to “structure an external world” (Glad, 2002: 25) that buttresses their pervasively exploitative actions which are designed to meet their own psychological needs.

From our reading of Kets de Vries and Miller (1985), it appeared the self-deceptive narcissistic leader standard was not as well advanced as the extremes of their narcissistic continuum. Whereas these authors described pathological narcissists as entitled, grandiose, and ruthless and constructive narcissists as creative, confident, and energetic, they attempted to place self-deceptive narcissists someplace in between. Although this particular form could be criticized for insufficient development, we think the general notion of other types of narcissistic leaders between the polar extremes (dimensionality versus categorization) is sound. Thus, we have placed our framework on the continuum from reactive narcissism to constructive narcissism.

Moreover, we find the literature intimating (e.g., Maccoby, 2000; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006) a relationship between narcissistic inclinations of leaders and the exhibition of charismatic leadership quite compelling. In particular, there is empirical evidence that narcissism is related to the personalized form of charismatic influence (Popper, 2002). This makes intuitive sense to us as an individual leader’s capability to exhibit the personalized form of charisma is “related to the foundations underlying the differences in individuals’ tendency to care for and invest in others” (Popper, 2002: 802). However, we think this statement is equally applicable to socialized charismatic leaders who may possess this capacity. Even though Popper (2002) found a negative correlation between narcissism and the socialized form of charisma, we would offer these results may be attributable in large part to the measurement instrument. Since the survey was comprised of forced choice items, we are again confronted with the issue of categorization, which is, classifying narcissism primarily by how closely the sample leaders resembled the reactive narcissistic extreme, rather than establishing where they would fall along a narcissistic scale. Because of this, we agree with Rosenthal and Pittinsky’s (2006: 628) supposition that “productive narcissists would be good candidates to be socialized charismatic leaders and vice versa.” Based upon these findings and assumption, we would extend this line of reasoning by submitting our conviction that in concert with narcissistic propensity, charismatic leadership should also be considered and examined as a scaled construct.

In explaining our conceptualization along this continuum, noting the work of Kets de Vries and Miller (1985), we also found it more straightforward to initially clarify the dichotomous dimensions. We judged doing so simultaneously would set the boundaries

of our framework and thereby aid in the rationalization of leader motivations, emotions, behaviors, and outcomes that undoubtedly reside amid these bimodal margins.

First, we agree with Maccoby (2000) and Rosenthal and Pittinsky (2006) that a comprehensive review of the literature presents a coherent prospective link between constructive narcissism and socialized charisma. This substantiation is even more clearly pronounced with the literature concerning reactive narcissism, those with true pathology, and the relationship with personalized charismatic leadership. The first task, then, was the disparate portrayal of the differing projected sequence from leader motivation through follower outcomes for these continuum extremities.

We begin with the disparity in power motivations of reactive narcissistic and constructive narcissistic leaders. “Clearly, power is one of the great motivators for narcissistic leaders” (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006: 626). We think there are considerable differences in power motivations, however, corresponding to the spectrum of narcissism previously described. We agree that reactive narcissists crave power, consistently attempt to secure more of it, and oftentimes, at great peril to themselves and their followers (Glad, 2002). Rosenthal and Pittinsky (2006: 627) regarded this as personalized power motivation, shaped by “egotism” and, we would offer, surfacing from a sense of grandiosity, resulting in weak and inept followers. Conversely, leaders with a socialized power motivation seek to enhance the capabilities of followers (McClelland & Burnham, 1976) and receive satisfaction from this accomplishment (Spreier, Fontaine, & Malloy, 2006). While leaders with a socialized power motivation do seek power, they lack the level of egotism and display at least some modicum of humility (Maccoby, 2000). We suggest that these divergent power motivations correspond to the narcissistic spectrum, setting the stage for the differential emergence of personalized versus socialized charisma.

There are certainly intervening steps in these contrasting processes however. Of particular importance is the environmental perspective of the leader. Other authors (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1985; Maccoby, 2000) have noted this, as “the positive side of narcissistic leaders begins to become evident” once perspective-taking is introduced (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006: 628). Whereas constructive narcissist leaders, due in large measure to their humility oriented socialized power motivation, take into account significant environmental factors (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1985), reactive narcissists do not; they simply bypass this important leadership action, or if they do on rare occasion, that assessment is so distorted that it lacks validity (Conger & Kanungo, 1998). Kets de Vries and Miller (1985) suggested such narcissistic leaders avoid the analyses of internal and external environments, even when involved in crucial decision-making. Lubit (2002) offered these extreme narcissistic personalities also are likely to possess unrealistic vision because of their sense of grandiosity, which limits their readiness (i.e., willingness and capacity), leading them to more easily fall into strategic blunders and eventual negative follower outcomes.

From this point in our conceptualization, whether the leader completely circumvented the environmental perspective (reactive narcissists) or seriously considered the

contextual landscape and potential ramifications (constructive narcissists) we introduce the status of followers. We realize that at first glance, some might find this portrayal as overtly leader-centric. This is not our purpose, though, as we are advocates for the importance of followers to the leadership dyad with respect to receptivity (Weierter, 1997), susceptibility (Wofford, Whittington, & Goodwin, 2001), and desirability (Casimir, Waldman, Bartram, & Yang, 2006) of charismatic influence and agree with Jacobsen and House (2001: 76), in that, it is “self-evident” that leaders and followers are part of one interrelated system.

Of course, we also accept that few “would dispute the point that leaders exercise influence, taking actions that ... shape the behavior of others” (Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs, & Fleishman, 2000: 11) and do not find these positions mutually exclusive, since we are not suggesting that charismatic leadership based upon narcissistic penchant is something that is done only to followers. Where Klein and House (1995) used a fire metaphor to explain this relationship (i.e., leader as spark and followers as combustible material), and were criticized for portraying followers in such a passive role, we find elements of truth in both of these viewpoints, although addressing the leader-centric versus follower-centric debate was not our objective.

Instead, it was our intent to illustrate widespread follower outcomes from leaders’ narcissistic needs and subsequent emergent leadership components. This stance necessitated holding the initial follower status constant in the representation, thereby highlighting the discrete leadership elements, resultant activation of follower self-concepts (Kark & Shamir, 2002), and ensuing follower responses and effects. Since charismatic leadership is thought to most readily emerge during some level of turbulence (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006), we have staged the initial follower state very broadly with the simple tags of confusion and uncertainty, as these conditions would be common to most followers in such an environment, regardless of self-concept clarity (Howell & Shamir, 2005) to which the leader behavioral elements are presented.

We do know a good deal about these factors, especially at the truly pathological level of narcissistic typology. While there are small variations, in general this extensive literature (see Brown, 1997) describes components affecting leadership such as denial, self-aggrandizement, egotism, and entitlement. In comparison, applying the works of Choi (2006) and Rosenthal & Pittinsky (2006), we agree that these components would be more akin to envisioning, energizing, enabling, and empowering with respect to socialized charismatic constructive narcissist leaders.

We propose that with the presentation of these leadership elements, ranging from those associated with reactive narcissism to constructive narcissism, the crucial nature of individual follower self-concepts becomes apparent. Even though we identify the self-concept as a multi-faceted construct (Brewer & Gardner, 1996), we think that Kark and Shamir (2002) were correct in their assessment of the paramount role of the relational and collective levels.

Kark and Shamir (2002) proposed two types of charismatic relationships: “one in which the relational self is activated and the primary mechanism of influence is followers’ personal identification with the charismatic leader, and one in which the collective self is activated through followers’ social identification with the group” (Howell & Shamir, 2005: 100). Markedly, the relationship formed on the basis of the personal identification with a charismatic leader is consistent with the personalized variety.

While we think this conceptualization is broadly legitimate and supported by prior theoretical efforts, we take the suggestion of Howell and Shamir (2005) seriously. Although we adamantly assert that leader behavior influences follower psychological states and consequent responses, we also accept that individual differences of followers could be “powerful determinants of their behavior and their reactions to the leader” (Howell & Shamir, 2005: 97), thereby altering the degree and form of activation. Therefore, we have incorporated a dashed line representing the spectrum from the relational self to the collective self to include the potential of follower individual differences (see Figure 1). We are attempting to depict that even though the degree of leader narcissism leads to certain activities and leadership elements resulting in specific activations of self-concept with a preponderance of followers, the individual psychosocial characteristics of some followers could modify subsequent progression from this point in our representation. In other words, it is conceivable that a particular follower of a reactive narcissist, due to high self-esteem and robust self-concept, could attempt to establish a more socialized charismatic relationship with the leader (Howell & Shamir, 2005), although we doubt a successful outcome; such leaders tend to require sycophants.

In the case where reactive narcissist leadership encourages the initiation of the relational self of followers, those followers generate a myopic focus on the persona and priorities of the leader (Howell & Shamir, 2005), leading to follower dependency and inviting eventual exploitation (Choi, 2006), hallmarks of personalized charismatic leadership. In opposition, on those occasions where constructive narcissist leadership promotes the activation of the collective level of self-concept, those followers develop a broader focus of the leader/follower dyad’s identity and values and concern for group needs, resulting in the empowerment and development of those followers and the attribution of socialized charismatic leadership.

Thus far, our exposition has utilized the extremes along the narcissistic leader scale to establish the boundaries for our dimensional conceptualization and set the stage for the interactions occurring between these poles. However, we also propose that situational determinants can intercept the progression from narcissistic leader inclination and alter the leadership sequence by way of situational narcissism, such that, the form of charismatic leadership exhibited will not correspond with theoretical expectations.

We do know that situational determinants can impact leadership (Shamir & Howell, 1999) and that charismatic leadership does not emerge in a vacuum (de Hoogh et al., 2004; Roberts & Bradley, 1988). We assume that structures of personality surface from an “interactive cycle of personality, behavior, and situation” (Erikson, 1963, as cited by

Kets de Vries & Miller, 1985: 591) and that leader behavior and consequences are influenced by situations. Vroom and Jago (2007: 23) have even suggested the possibility of situation-specific traits and offered that leadership theories “based only on dispositional or purely situational terms” are incomplete. While Erikson’s statement speaks to the crucial role of early experiences in shaping core personality, we are extending this to include the role of current significant experiences, not in changing a core personality dimension like narcissistic degree, which we agree would be difficult (Kets de Vries, & Miller, 1985) but, rather, in shifting the leadership sequence that would naturally transpire from it by way of what we deem situational narcissism. We find support from Jorstad (1996: 18) who asserted “the degree of narcissism is not merely a character trait, but can also be considered a state of mind which may change according to the circumstances.”

We would suggest that upon suffering a significant negative event, one could experience a psychological process called splitting. This is a primitive defense mechanism and describes the tendency to see everything in good or bad terms that leads one to perceive everything around them in oversimplified expressions, often leading to hostility and an impaired conception of reality (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1985). It is the creation of such hostility that allows for horrific atrocities (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006) and irrational (Glad, 2002) vision that is associated with reactive narcissism. So, even with different leaders with similar constructive narcissistic inclinations and power motivations, supporting the socialized form of charisma, a significant negative event could initiate psychological splitting leading to inordinate hostility and irrationality. We maintain this could create a form of situational narcissism that intercepts the natural leadership progression, shifting the environmental perspective (avoidant), leadership behaviors (self-aggrandizement), follower psychological reactions (relational self), leadership attributions (personalized), and follower outcomes (dependency and exploitation) toward the reactive side of the continuum. In other words, a negative transcendent event might lead to a development sequence of leadership whereby an element of situational narcissism was initiated, in due course creating the attribution of the personalized form of leader charisma and subsequent outcomes without the conventional diagnostic criteria of a reactive narcissistic personality (signified by the dashed arrow to the pathological sequence in Figure 1).

In our representation, we also show a faint line from the significant event towards the progression from constructive narcissism through socialized charisma and positive follower outcomes. We have done so to imply that although we see the situational shift more likely from a negative event, we are holding out the possibility that a significant positive event might shift a middle-range narcissistic leader (i.e., self-deceptive) towards the more constructive and socialized side of the continuum as well. This potential is shown as weaker; however, as we believe the core narcissistic tendencies are more easily shifted toward the reactive side of the scale.

In summary, we offer our psychologically integrated conceptual framework of dimensional narcissism and emerging relative charismatic leadership patterns. As opposed to the conventional supposition that personalized charisma is related to a more

pathological perspective of narcissism, we propose that a transcendent event may lead to a development cycle of leader behavior whereby an element of situational narcissism is initiated, thus shifting the expected leadership sequence, leader actions, follower attributions of charismatic influence, and ultimately, follower outcomes.

Contributions, Limitations, Implications, and Future Research

This article contributes to our understanding of potential charismatic leadership emergence by providing a conceptual framework of the interacting role of degrees of leader narcissism, situational elements, self-concepts within the leader/follower dyad, and subsequent follower outcomes. We provide at least a rudimentary illustration of an integrated framework of the psychological motivations of charismatic appearance and form amid situational dynamism, particularly with the introduction of the concept of situational narcissism, and hope our conceptualization stimulates further theoretical debate and subsequent empirical inquiries.

As far as limitations are concerned, first, we acknowledge that some would see our inductive approach a limitation. To some extent we agree, as at least some measure of our framework was originally inspired from our perceptions of past leaders (Humphreys et al, 2009) and that must certainly be considered a limiting factor. For example, Gibbert et al. (2008) might question the construct validity associated with our “subjective” judgments, although empirical data must also be interpreted and “the interpreters are never value-free” (Gitelman, 1992: 592). Moreover, our focus was on conceptualization. We think such speculative efforts may even be preferable “when ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions are being posed” (Yin, 2003: 1). It was our intent to pursue a more phenomenological approach so that we might offer a broad framework rather than a “... conceptually minor but mathematically difficult addition to a familiar model” (Lamond, 2008: 310). In fact, we join others who have expressed concern (e.g., Daft & Lewin, 1990; Mir & Watson, 2000) that the desire to pursue the strategies associated with the natural sciences approach has led us to emphasize methodology to such a degree it could hinder the development of new theory. Even so, we specifically attempted to support our proposals from the literature.

Although intentional, a second limitation is the narrow inclusion of follower characteristics in our framework. There is increasing awareness that follower perceptions may influence receptivity to various leader behaviors (Weierter, 1997) and that the follower side of the charismatic relationship demands scrutiny (Howell & Shamir, 2005). Thus acknowledged, we think that a more integrated perspective of the interplay between narcissism, leader charisma, and situational factors is fundamental (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006) and, therefore, the focus of this article. It was our intent to illustrate follower outcomes from a general dispositional state of need, reacting to differential emerging leadership elements based upon narcissistic tendencies and situational catalysts. This necessitated holding the initial follower state constant even though we would grant, and did with regard to the activation of self-concepts, that follower variables would alter the degree of charismatic sway and subsequent follower outcomes by degree.

We think the greatest limitations are not these, however, but those more aligned with quantity and time. Of course, this may also be the greatest contribution of our conceptualization in terms of the generation of future research. For example, while we have provided a theoretical framework of the progressions and dimensions we have depicted, just how significant an event must arise for situational narcissism to develop? At what level of narcissistic inclination does situational narcissism most easily emerge and precisely how far can this shifting of core personality travel along the narcissistic continuum? Can our conjecture that such swings in narcissistic tendency are more likely to move toward the reactive pole rather than the constructive one be supported? Are these movements due to situational narcissism temporary or permanent? If temporary, what mechanism determines the length of influence and does the ensuing attribution of the form of charismatic sway correspond with this time frame? Or does this influence only wane once negative follower outcomes have materialized? These questions not only offer the opportunity for numerous empirical and conceptual efforts, but also implications for organizational leaders.

Most notably, we think further study into the possibility of limiting the behaviors and outcomes of narcissistic leaders trending toward the reactive side of the spectrum, with some sort of positive intervention (e.g., training, coaching, mentoring) in the attempt to shift the leadership progression and stimulate more socialized charismatic leadership, is warranted. We also think the creation of situational narcissism described within our framework, should be considered within the investigation of workplace violence, often perpetrated by individuals judged without the necessary make-up for pursuing such actions.

Conclusion

Clearly, theoretical integration and more nuanced explanations of the interaction between narcissism, charismatic leadership, and situational determinants are required, since “normal and abnormal human functioning is, at best, the result of a complex interaction of apparent volitional choices with an array of biogenetic and environmental determinants” (Widiger & Coker, 2003: 5). Although conceptual clutter abounds, to further the discussion of the dynamics between leaders’ psychological motivations, behaviors, and outcomes and those of their followers, we offer our dimensional conceptual framework of situational influences amid leader narcissistic disposition and emerging charismatic leadership patterns.

References

- American Psychiatric Association. (2000). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (4th Ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association.
- Bedell, K., Hunter, S., Angie, A., & Vert, A. (2006). A historiometric examination of Machiavellianism and a new taxonomy of leadership. *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, 12(4), 50-72.
- Beyer, J. M. (1999). Taming and promoting charisma to change organizations. *Leadership Quarterly*, 10(2), 307-330.

- Brown, A. D. (1997). Narcissism, identity, and legitimacy. *Academy of Management Review*, 22(3), 643-686.
- Brown, M. E., & Trevino, L. K. (2006). Socialized charismatic leadership, values congruence, and deviance in work groups. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 91(4), 54-962.
- Casimir, G., Waldman, D. A., Bartram, T., & Yang, S. (2006). Trust and the relationship between leadership and follower performance: Opening the black box in Australia and China. *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, 12(3), 68-84.
- Choi, J. (2006). A motivational theory of charismatic leadership: Envisioning, empathy, and empowerment. *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, 13(1), 24-43.
- Conger, J. A. (1999). Charismatic and transformational leadership in organizations: An insider's perspective on these developing streams of research. *Leadership Quarterly*, 10(2), 145-179.
- Conger, J. A., & Kanungo, R. N. (1994). Charismatic leadership in organizations: Perceived behavioral attributes and their measurement. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 15(5), 439-452.
- Conger, J. A., & Kanungo, R. N. (1998). *Charismatic leadership: The elusive factor in organizational effectiveness*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Conger, J. A., Kanungo, R. N., & Menon, S. T. (2000). Charismatic leadership and follower effects. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 21(7), 747-767.
- Cooper, A. M. (1986). Narcissism. In A. Morrison (Ed.), *Essential papers on narcissism* (pp. 112-143). New York: New York University Press.
- Daft, R. L., & Lewin, A. Y. (1990). Can organization studies begin to break out of the normal science straightjacket? An editorial essay. *Organization Science*, 1(1), 1-9.
- de Hoogh, A. H. B., den Hartog, D. N., Koopman, P. L., Thierry, H., van den Berg, P. T., van der Weide, J. G., & Wilderom, C. P. M. (2004). Charismatic leadership, environmental dynamism, and performance. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 13(4), 447-471.
- Dvir, T., Eden, D., Avolio, B. J., & Shamir, B. (2002). Impact of transformational leadership on follower development and performance: A field experiment. *Academy of Management Journal*, 45(4), 735-744.
- Ellis, H. (1898). Auto-eroticism: A psychological study. *Alienist and Neurologist*, 19, 260-299.
- Erikson, E. H. (1963). *Childhood and society*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.
- Freud, S. (1914). On Narcissism: An introduction. Reprinted in J. Rickman (Ed.), 1937. *A general selection from the works of Sigmund Freud. Psycho-Analytical Epitomes*, 1, 118-141.
- Freud, S. (1931). Libidinal types. *Collected Papers, Vol. 5*. London: Hogarth Press.
- Gibbert, M., Ruigrok, W., & Wick, B. (2008). What passes as a rigorous case study? *Strategic Management Journal*, 29(13), 1465-1474.
- Gitelman, H. M. (1992). Manufacturing knowledge: A history of the Hawthorne experiments. *Business History Review*, 66, 590-592.
- Glad, B. (2002). Why tyrants go too far: Malignant narcissism and absolute power. *Political Psychology*, 23, 1-37.

- Goren, E. R. (1995). Review essay: Narcissism and the interpersonal self. *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 12(2), 329-342.
- Hogg, M. A. (2001). A social identity theory of leadership. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 5(3), 184-200.
- Horney, K. (1939). *New ways in psychoanalysis*. New York: Norton.
- House, R. J. (1977). A 1976 theory of charismatic leadership. In J.G. Hunt & L.L. Larson (Eds.), *Leadership: The cutting edge* (pp. 189-207). Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University.
- House, R. J., & Howell, J. M. (1992). Personality and charismatic leadership. *Leadership Quarterly*, 3(2), 81-108.
- Howell, J. M., & Avolio, B. J. (1992). The ethics of charismatic leadership: Submission or liberation? *Academy of Management Executive*, 6(2), 43-54.
- Howell, J. M., & Shamir, B. (2005). The role of followers in the charismatic leadership process: Relationships and their consequences. *Academy of Management Review*, 30(1), 96-112.
- Humphreys, J. H., Pryor, M. G., Haden, S. P., & Oyler, J. D. (2009). The leadership of Joseph R. Walker: Towards a model of socialized charisma through expert power. *Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship*, 14(1), 59-81.
- Jacobsen, C., & House, R. J. (2001). Dynamics of charismatic leadership: A process theory, simulation model, and tests. *Leadership Quarterly*, 12(1), 75-112.
- Jorstad, J. (1996). Narcissism and leadership: Some differences in male and female leaders. *Leadership & Organizational Development Journal*, 17(6), 17-24.
- Judge, T. A., LePine, J. A., & Rich, B. L. (2006). Loving yourself abundantly: Relationship of the narcissistic personality to self and other perceptions of workplace deviance, leadership, and task and contextual performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 91(4), 762-776.
- Jung, D. I., & Sosik, J. J. (2006). Who are the spellbinders? Identifying personal attributes of charismatic leaders. *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, 12(4), 12-26.
- Kark, R., & Shamir, B. (2002). The dual effect of transformational leadership: Priming relational and collective selves and further effects on followers. In B.J. Avolio & F.J. Yammarino (Eds.), *Transformational and charismatic leadership: The road ahead* (pp. 67-91). Oxford: Elsevier Sciences.
- Kendall, R. C. (1975). *The role of diagnoses in psychiatry*. Oxford: Blackwell Scientific.
- Kernberg, O. F. (1967). Borderline personality organization. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 15(3), 641-685.
- Kernberg, O. F. (1985). *Borderline conditions and pathological narcissism*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, Inc.
- Kets de Vries, M. F. R., & Miller, D. (1985). Narcissism and leadership: An object relations perspective. *Human Relations*, 38(6), 583-601.
- King, G. (2007). Narcissism and effective crisis management: A review of potential problems and pitfalls. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, 15(4), 183-193.
- Klein, K., & House, R. (1995). On fire: Charismatic leadership and levels of analysis. *Leadership Quarterly*, 6(2), 183-198.

- Kohut, H. (1966). Forms and transformations of narcissism. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 14(2), 243-272.
- Kohut, H. (1971). *The analysis of the self*. New York: International Universities Press.
- Kraepelin, E. (1917). *Lectures on clinical psychiatry* (3rd Ed.). New York: William Wood.
- Kuhnert, K. W., & Lewis, P. (1987). Transactional and transformational leadership: A constructive/developmental analysis. *Academy of Management Review*, 12(4), 648-657.
- Lamond, D. (2008). More on scholarship in management history. *Journal of Management History*, 14(3), 309-312.
- Lubit, R. (2002). The long-term organizational impact of destructively narcissistic managers. *Academy of Management Executive*, 16(1), 127-138.
- Maccoby, M. (2000, January-February). Narcissistic leaders: The incredible pros, the inevitable cons. *Harvard Business Review*, 82(1), 69-77.
- McClelland, D. C., & Burnham, D. H. (1976, March-April). Power is the great motivator. *Harvard Business Review*, 54(2), 100-110.
- Mir, R., & Watson, A. (2000). Strategic management and the philosophy of science: The case for a constructivist methodology. *Strategic Management Journal*, 21(9), 941-953.
- Monastersky, R. (2008, December 5). When the brain breaks down. *ChronicleReview.com* Retrieved on 12/05/08 from <http://chronicle.com/weekly/v55/i15/15b0071.htm>
- Mumford, M. D., Antes, A. L., Caughron, J. J., & Friedrich, T. L. (2008). Charismatic, ideological, and pragmatic leadership: Multi-level influences on emergence and performance. *Leadership Quarterly*, 19(2), 144-160.
- Mumford, M. D., Gessner, T. E., Connelly, M. S., O'Connor, J. A., & Clifton, T. C. (1993). Leadership and destructive acts: Individual and situation influences. *Leadership Quarterly*, 4(2), 115-147.
- Mumford, M. D., Zaccaro, S. J., Connelly, M. S., & Marks, M. A. (2000). Leadership skills: Conclusions and future directions. *Leadership Quarterly*, 11(1), 155-170.
- O'Connor, J. A., Mumford, M. D., Clifton, T. C., Gessner, T. E., & Connelly, M. S. (1995). Charismatic leaders and destructiveness: An historiometric study. *Leadership Quarterly*, 6(4), 529-555.
- Plato (1973). *The collected dialogues of Plato*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Plowman, D. A., Baker, L. T., Beck, T. E., Kulkarni, M., Solansky, S. T., & Travis, D. V. (2007). Radical change accidentally: The emergence and amplification of small change. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50(3), 515-543.
- Popper, M. (2002). Narcissism and attachment patterns of personalized and socialized charismatic leaders. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 19(6), 797-809.
- Popper, M., Mayseless, O., & Castelnovo, O. (2000). Transformational leadership and attachment. *Leadership Quarterly*, 11(2), 267-289.
- Raskin, R., & Hall, C. (1981). The narcissistic personality inventory: Alternate form reliability and further evidence of construct validity. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 45(2), 159-162.

- Raskin, R., & Terry, H. (1988). A principal component analysis of the narcissistic personality inventory and future evidence of its construct validity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 54, 890-902.
- Roberts, N. C., & Bradley, R. T. (1988). Limits of charisma. In J.A. Conger & R.N. Kanungo (Eds.), *Charismatic leadership: The elusive factor in organizational effectiveness*: (pp. 253-275). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Rosenthal, S. A., & Pittinsky, T. L. (2006). Narcissistic leadership. *Leadership Quarterly*, 17(6), 617-633.
- Sankowsky, D. (1995). The charismatic leader as narcissist: Understanding the abuse of power. *Organizational Dynamics*, 23(4), 57-71.
- Shamir, B., House, R. J., & Arthur, M. B. (1993). The motivational effects of charismatic leadership: A self-concept based theory. *Organization Science*, 4(4), 577-594.
- Shamir, B., & Howell, J. M. (1999). Organizational and contextual influences on the emergence and effectiveness of charismatic leadership. *Leadership Quarterly*, 10(2), 257-283.
- Spreier, S. W., Fontaine, M. H., & Malloy, R. L. (2006, June). Leadership run amok: The destructive potential of overachievers. *Harvard Business Review*, 84(6), 72-82.
- Vroom, V. H., & Jago, A. G. (2007). The role of situation in leadership. *American Psychologist*, 62(1), 17-24.
- Weber, M. (1947). In A.M. Henderson and T. Parsons (Trans.), T. Parsons (Ed.), *The theory of social and economic organization*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Weierter, S. J. M. (1997). Who wants to play "follow the leader"? A theory of charismatic relationships based on routinized charisma and follower characteristics. *Leadership Quarterly*, 8(2), 171-194.
- Widiger, T., & Coker, L. (2003). Mental disorders as discrete clinical conditions: Dimensional versus categorical classification. In M. Hersen and S. Turner (Eds.), *Adult psychopathology and diagnosis* (Vol. 4, pp. 3-35). New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.
- Wofford, J. C., Whittington, J. L., & Goodwin, V. L. (2001). Follower motive patterns as situational moderators for transformational leadership effectiveness. *Journal of Managerial Issues*, 13(2), 196-211.
- Yin, R.K. (2003). *Case study research* (3rd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Zaleznik, A., & Kets de Vries, M. F. R. (1975). *Power and the corporate mind*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.