PERSPECTIVE

Two sides of the same personality coin: An opportunity to refocus (un)ethical analysis

Abstract

Prior ethics studies highlight the importance of understanding positive *or* negative leader personality characteristics to improve organizational outcomes. However, few studies combine both positive *and* negative leader personality characteristics, to unpack and guide ethics theorizations. This lack of methodological balance restricts how we perceive leader ethics, our understandings of organizational experiences, and therefore, our awareness of governance approaches. This study challenges the dominant ethics scholarly orthodoxy—which focuses on positive *or* negative leader characteristics—by combining self-determination theory *and* the Dark Triad perspective, to explore the plurality of ethical dimensions within organizational leadership. A case example is provided to highlight the need for this methodological awareness and four avenues of engagement are discussed to improve future organizational governance and ethics scholarship.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Leaders hold a disproportionately large portion of power and responsibility within their organizations. As such, their personality traits and ethical orientation play a critical role in the success or failure of their organizations. Thus, a large swath of existing research explores ethical questions surrounding how best to motivate and govern leaders for optimal organizational outcomes (Chatterjee & Pollock, 2017; De Baerdemaeker & Bruggeman, 2015; Galvin et al., 2010; Hartmann & Maas, 2010; Olsen et al., 2014; Olsen & Stekelberg, 2016; Shafer & Simmons, 2008; Whetstone, 2002). Lewin's field theory suggests interdependent forces within individuals' environments shape their behavior (Lewin, 1942). Trait activation theory posits individuals' personality traits lie dormant until they are activated by situational cues (Tett et al., 2013). In the absence of appropriate situational cues or leader governance that activate positive leader traits and suppress negative traits, socially responsible behavior of leaders

may be stifled, and issues of moral self-licensing may arise (Blanken et al., 2015; Merritt et al., 2010). As such, continued research on how best to motivate and govern leaders' behavior is important to provide critical ethical guardrails for increased accountability and transparency (Petrovits et al., 2011; Young et al., 2016).

De Colle and Freeman (2020) have called for a better understanding of the complexity of motivations and personality of leaders, to improve ethics scholarship, and to develop appropriate ethical compliance structures. Fortunately, existing psychology scholarship offers a smooth theoretical onramp to unpack and understand *multiple* personality dimensions of organizational leaders, for the purposes of improved organizational ethics and outcomes (Howson, 2005; Kennedy, 2019; O'Leary, 2017). As leaders guide their organizations, fostering positive motivators may encourage socially responsible behavior (Gagne, 2003; Shah & Arjoon, 2015). Conversely, ineffective organizational governance for leaders' darker personality traits may lead to self-serving, opportunistic behavior, that undermines organizational outcomes (Jonason & Webster, 2010; Jones & Paulhus, 2014). In this paper, we argue that understanding the multiple sides of leaders' personalities, in tandem, offers a key to creating healthy and ethically vibrant organizations, that act as stewards for their stakeholders.

Surprisingly, the dominant methodological orthodoxy in ethics scholarship is to examine positive *or* negative leader personality characteristics in isolation (and often only a single personality trait). There are many academic articles that provide valuable insights on the nexus between one positive *or* one negative aspect of ethical leadership and organizational outcomes (e.g., Bailey, 2015; Boddy, 2017; Johnsen, 2018; Shafer & Lucianetti, 2018; Zaccaro, 2007). Far fewer ethics studies deploy methodologies that combine both positive *and* negative leader characteristics in tandem, to understand and guide organizational outcomes (notable exceptions to this are: Fatfouta, 2019; Gumusluoglu et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2018; Van Scotter & Roglio, 2020). This methodological limitation—of prior ethics scholarship not examining both positive *and* negative personality characteristics simultaneously—can be highlighted by Robert Louis Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde* (2006). Dr. Henry Jekyll was characterized as a humble, kind man engaged in philanthropic work. Mr. Edward Hyde was evil, self-indulgent, and uncaring about anyone but himself. The point is that understanding only one aspect or side of the Jekyll-Hyde duality results in a reductionist perspective, an incomplete picture of the person, and may lead to misguided assumptions, value misappropriations, and suboptimal governance practices. Therefore, the critical argument we make in this paper *is*

that aspects of both positive and negative personality traits are present and intertwined in even the best of leaders, and as such, future ethics research should investigate both sides of the 'personality coin' in tandem to extend and enrich the field.

In this paper, we argue for a new methodological balance in ethics scholarship. This methodological balance, of combining *both* sides of the personality coin, will improve what we learn about organizational ethics through psychology, our understanding of organizational situations and experiences, along with awareness of governance approaches, which can then be used to create more effective organizations. We proceed on a parallel track, to understand both positive and negative personality traits, using the theoretical lens of—self-determination (SD) (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and the perspective of the Dark Triad (DT) (Jones & Paulhus, 2014). SD is comprised of three psychological needs: *competence*, *autonomy*, and *relatedness* (Deci & Ryan, 2000). DT is comprised of three personality traits: *narcissism*, *Machiavellianism*, and *psychopathy* (Jonason & Webster, 2010; Jones, 2014; Jones & Paulhus, 2014). The need to engage in *both* sides of this personality coin in tandem is highlighted with a detailed anonymized example. Subsequently, we discuss four critical avenues of scholarly engagement, to improve the dominant ethics orthodoxy.

This paper makes three contributions. First, we provide a detailed approach, and validated codebook, to simultaneously investigate both sides of the personality coin in alternative contexts. Second, we demonstrate the efficacy of our methodological claim through an empirical case study of an organizational leader. Third, this paper offers a roadmap to address four avenues of needed ethics research, for the purposes of developing public policy and organizational performance. Overall, this paper responds to a call for methods that foster deeper ethical analysis (Greenwood & Freeman, 2018) as well as providing foundational opportunities to improve the questions we ask about leadership and ethics (Palanski et al., 2019).

2 | EXPLANATIONS OF LEADERS' DUAL PERSONALITIES

Prior studies use multiple theories to understand the personality traits, motivations, and behaviors of leaders and how these traits, motivations, and behaviors impact their organizations' success. Many of these studies focus on the relationship between ethical behavior and *a single* aspect of personality, such as narcissism (De Baerdemaeker & Bruggeman, 2015; Chatterjee & Pollock, 2017; Galvin et al., 2010; Hartmann & Maas, 2010; Olsen et al., 2014; Olsen & Stekelberg, 2016; Shafer & Simmons, 2008). Even though these studies are rigorous and insightful, they capture only one dimension of the ethical leader picture.

From an epistemological point of view, the use of one psychology dimension may influence what we know about organizational ethics and psychology, our understandings of organizational experiences, and our awareness of suitable governance approaches. The essence of this point is captured by Owens et al. (2015) and Zhang

et al. (2017), who suggest additional research is needed to better understand paradoxical aspects of leaders. Trait activation theory suggests different personality traits are activated by particular situational cues, which may account for seemingly inconsistent behavior (Tett et al., 2013). Thus, the thrust of this paper is to encourage scholars to employ methods that examine *both* positive and negative characteristics of leaders to better understand (un)ethical behavior. To highlight this point, the remainder of this paper proceeds with an explanation and case example of self-determination theory *and* the Dark Triad perspective.

Self-determination (SD) theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) is associated with socially responsible behavior (Gagne, 2003; Shah & Arjoon, 2015) and is comprised of three psychological needs that motivate people: *competence*, *autonomy*, and *relatedness* (Deci & Ryan, 2000). *Competence* is an intrinsic motivator, as opposed to an extrinsic motivator such as money (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Van den Broeck et al. (2010, p. 982) define competence as an "inherent desire to feel effective in interacting with the environment," which is manifest by individuals striving to accomplish challenging tasks or improve certain skills. Deci and Ryan (2000) suggest positive feedback may aid in satisfying the need for competence, thereby increasing motivation. *Autonomy* is described as individuals' inherent desire for psychological freedom and the ability to make decisions independently (Van den Broeck et al., 2010). Deci et al. (2001) position autonomy as freedom of choice and control of one's actions. Deci and Ryan (2000) posit individuals acting on their personal interests, free from external motivators, epitomize autonomy. While leaders generally seek autonomy, unbridled autonomy can result in feelings of isolation and result in harm to the organization (Espedal, 2017). *Relatedness* is positioned as a desire to belong. Van den Broeck et al. (2010) portray relatedness as an individual's desire to fit into social groups, nurture relationships, and feel connected with others. Leaders are motivated to act in a positive manner when they feel a sense of relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Conversely, the Dark Triad (DT) perspective explains the motivations behind self-serving and opportunistic behavior, in terms of three personality traits: *narcissism*, *Machiavellianism*, and *psychopathy* (Jonason & Webster, 2010; Jones & Paulhus, 2014). Although the three traits are positively correlated, Paulhus and Williams (2002) posit these traits are distinct and should be measured separately to provide a greater understanding of the individual. *Narcissism* includes characteristics such as grandiosity, pride, egotism, and a lack of empathy (Kohut, 2009). Individuals high in narcissism are motivated by self-protection, status-seeking, self-gratification, and a desire to dominate others (Błachnio et al., 2016; Jonason & Zeigler-Hill, 2018). *Machiavellianism* involves exploiting and manipulating others, combined with a disregard for morality and a focus on self-interest (Dahling et al., 2009). Leaders high in Machiavellianism often bully others, strategically withhold and share information, and build good relationships only with those they perceive can further their personal ambitions (Jonason & Zeigler-Hill, 2018; Wilson et al., 1998). Leaders high in Machiavellianism are also motivated by independence and the desire for status (Jonason & Zeigler-Hill, 2018).

Psychopathy describes the trait of having an arrogant and deceitful interpersonal style, deficient affective experience, as well as impulsive and irresponsible behavior (Cooke & Michie, 2001). Leaders high in psychopathy are not motivated by self-protection or caring for others, but by a desire for status and dominance (Bailey, 2015; Jonason & Zeigler-Hill, 2018). Because leaders high in psychopathy lack acceptable moral standards, the "rationalization of fraud is easy or moot" (Bailey, 2015 p. 1307).

Overall, SD theory and the DT perspective provide foundational elements for understanding what motivates socially responsible and opportunistic behavior. This is important for future ethics scholarship and understanding more broadly how governance structures in different situations may activate either positive or negative personality traits and motivations of organizational leaders (Burnes & Cooke, 2013; Luria et al., 2019; Tett & Burnett, 2003). We offer a detailed systematic review that summarizes both SD and DT scholarship, in a codebook fashion, that can be used in future studies.

By utilizing Tables 1 and 2 ethics scholars may critically evaluate *both* sides of leader personality in tandem, to better understand (un)ethical behavior. This will aid in understanding and subsequently creating more effective governance structures to steer motivations and ethical practices in positive directions. Next, we provide a brief anonymized example of both SD and DT traits within a leader, to highlight how examining only the positive leader traits and the resulting good works may create an incomplete understanding of this leader's subsequent actions including the creation of an ineffective board of directors, lack of effective internal controls, and misuse of funds for personal benefit.

3 | AN EXAMPLE OF USING SD THEORY AND THE DT PERSPECTIVE IN TANDEM

This anonymized case example, of the SD-DT duality, is used here simply to illustrate the need for a methodological heterodox. Anonymized studies have been used in prior ethics scholarship (Boddy, 2017; Van Scotter & Roglio, 2020; Vaidya, 2019). There is extensive support for case studies and content analysis as a means of highlighting individual or organizational problems (Andon & Free, 2012; Cooper & Morgan, 2008; Kennedy, 2019; Kreutzer & Jacobs, 2011; Loughran & McDonald, 2016; O'Dwyer & Boomsma, 2015). Kufner et al. (2010), study leader motivations by observing a particular person and their actions, through written documents. Prior research indicates that individuals' personality characteristics can be detected through content analysis of written texts and archival materials (Ganellen, 2007; Neuman & Cohen, 2014; Winter, 1992).

A contribution of this paper is an empirical demonstration of how scholars can use content analysis to identify *both* SD and DT characteristics in the leader of an organization, in tandem. This leader was selected because s/he founded and ran a well-known international nonprofit organization that generated millions of dollars annually in donations. S/he represents the highs and lows of organizational

leadership (i.e., international award nominee and disgraced opportunist). This leader was highly successful at raising capital for the nonprofit organization. As a result of her/his leadership, multiple and sizable positive outcomes resulted for numerous people in several countries. This leader was the primary decision maker with respect to what projects the organization would engage in and where each project would be undertaken. S/he was often resistant to input from the Board of Directors and unresponsive to direction. This leader spoke at numerous events, received honorary degrees, and was featured in magazine cover stories. S/he received personal compensation for many of the speaking engagements, which s/he did not always share with the organization. S/he used organizational funds to charter planes for transportation to speaking engagements and family vacations. Government reports revealed major accounting irregularities, lack of financial controls, and divisions within the Board of Directors. This leader was required by a government authority to return a sizable amount of money to her/his organization to compensate for financial transgressions.

Three separate, publicly available, accounts of the leader were systematically analyzed using content analysis. To respect the leader's privacy, these accounts, which were written by different authors and agencies, are referred to as Account #1, Account #2, and Account #3. These accounts represent the perspectives of multiple parties and are written from different perspectives. In total, 451 pages were analyzed using content analysis; 336 pages in Account #1, 74 pages in Account #2, and 41 pages in Account #3. The content analysis proceeded on two tracks. First, a codebook was developed from a systematic review of SD and DT characteristics (Tables 1 and 2). Our codebook was developed by using well-validated psychological terms and constructs drawn from instruments and the literature that measure and describe SD and DT characteristics (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 2000; Jones & Paulhus, 2014; Van den Broeck et al., 2010). The individual cited instruments have been used in prior ethics studies to measure particular personality traits, but not collectively to measure both SD and DT characteristics in a single study. The codebook was used to identify phrases that describe SD and DT characteristics. Second, six coders independently used these codes to analyze the three separate texts. The textual analysis focused explicitly on the presence of SD and DT characteristics in the organizational leader. NVivo software was used for this textual analysis. Hand coding was also used by the six coders to confirm the findings in NVivo (>500 hr in total).

Sentences were the basis of meaning units. Thus, if an indicator of competence was present in a sentence, one meaning unit would be attributed to competence. After identifying the meaning units in each source, the findings were standardized on the basis of the number of pages in each text (Account #1, Account #2, and Account #3). This was done to provide equal weight to each point of view and quantity of textual material. Again, the purpose of this analysis is to highlight the complex, intertwined SD and DT characteristics present, within a single leader.

To evaluate the validity of the codebook, coding process, and findings, Cohen's kappa statistic was calculated (Cohen, 1960),

TABLE 1 Codebook for self-determination elements

Term	Definitions
Autonomy	
Work-related Basic Need Satisfaction Scale; (Van den Broeck et al., 2010)	• Can be myself at my job
	• Tasks at work are in line with what I really want to do
	• Free to do my job the way I think it could best be done
Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Frustration Scale; (Chen et al., 2015)	• A sense of choice and freedom in the things I undertake
	• My decisions reflect what I really want
	• My choices express who I really am
	• Doing what really interests me
Basic Need Satisfaction in General; (La Guardia et al., 2000)	• Free to decide for myself how to live my life
	• Free to express my ideas and opinions
	• Can pretty much be myself in my daily situations
Competence	
Work-related Basic Need Satisfaction Scale; (Van den Broeck et al., 2010)	• Master my tasks at my job
	• Competent at my job
	• Good at the things I do in my job
	• Can even accomplish the most difficult tasks at work
Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Frustration Scale; (Chen et al., 2015)	• Confident that I can do things well
	• Capable at what I do
	• Competent to achieve my goals
	• Can successfully complete difficult tasks
Basic Need Satisfaction in General; (La Guardia et al., 2000)	• People tell me I am good at what I do
	• Able to learn interesting new skills recently
	• A sense of accomplishment from what I do
Perceived Competence for Learning—Williams and Deci (1996)	• Confident in my ability to learn this material
	• Capable of learning the material in this course
	• Able to achieve my goals in this course
	• Able to meet the challenge of performing well in this course
Relatedness	
Work-related Basic Need Satisfaction Scale; (Van den Broeck et al., 2010)	• Part of a group
	• Can talk with people about things that really matter to me
	• Some people I work with are close friends of mine
Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Frustration Scale; (Chen et al., 2015)	• People I care about also care about me
	• Experience a warm feeling with the people I spend time with
	• Connected with people who care for me, and for whom I care
	• Close and connected with other people who are important to me
Basic Need Satisfaction in General; (La Guardia et al., 2000)	• Like the people I interact with
	• Get along with people I come into contact with
	• Consider the people I regularly interact with to be my friends
	• People in my life care about me
	• People I interact with on a daily basis tend to take my feelings into consideration
	• People are generally pretty friendly toward me

which summarizes the inter-rater reliability of the coders, correcting for chance agreement. Cohen's kappa (K) was 0.71 for the SD findings and 0.76 for the DT coding. In both instances, Cohen's kappa (K) indicates a high degree of inter-coder agreement.[1] The purpose of multi-coding the three separate texts was intended to reduce subjectivity and selectivity (rarely does context multi-coding with six independent coders happen). Additionally, this provides a high level of confidence that SD and DT characteristics may occur within a single individual and be activated by different situations. This ethical interplay is necessary to understand leaders behave in both socially responsible and duplicitous manners.

The findings of this case study support the main thesis of this paper—there is a need to examine both positive *and* negative leader characteristics, in tandem, to unpack and understand organizational outcomes, for the purpose of creating effective governance structures to guide leaders. Content analysis of Account #1, Account #2, and Account #3 provide evidence of behavior that was motivated by desires for competence, autonomy, and relatedness and some by narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. To compare the presence of SD and DT characteristics across the three data sources, standardized meaning units are used. Standardized meaning unit results are the average number of sentences per page that indicate the presence of each motivator or trait item within each text.

The strong support for competence reflects the prosocial projects, as well as scholarships, honorary degrees, and other awards reflecting the leader's achievements. Further, competence reflects the degree of socially responsible behavior s/he exhibited. Evidence of autonomy is found in the leader's ability to decide which projects to undertake and how to complete those projects. Relatedness is evidenced in the leader's affections toward others (i.e., hugs), developing friendships, working alongside others in communities, and shared hospitality.

The evidence of narcissism is consistent with ignoring requests to document expenses, not following the Board of Directors' recommendations, and multiple public appearances in which her/his personal accomplishments and risk-taking behavior were exaggerated (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007). Machiavellianism is evidenced in failure to share information with the Board of Directors and using organizational funds for personal expenses such as charter flights for family vacations. These findings are consistent with mismanagement of funds, manipulating employees, and frequent lying, as well as moral-self, licensing (Blanken et al., 2015). Psychopathy is associated with high employee turnover, bullying, and loss of revenue in organizations (Boddy, 2017).

The findings in Figure 1 and Table 3 highlight the presence of SD and DT characteristics in the leader. The common thread is that all three elements of SD (competence, autonomy, and relatedness) are found within all three written documents (*Account #1, Account #2, and Account #3*). The same can be said about all three elements of DT (narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy). Figure 1 aggregates aspects of SD and DT across all three texts. Table 3 illustrates the frequency of each character in the three individual texts as well

as a standardized measure. The delta of the standardized units reveals greater differences in DT personality traits than SD motivators per page.

In the absence of using the suggested methodological heterodox to assess the range of personality traits of this leader, there would be an unbalanced appraisal of the (un)ethical landscape, thereby obfuscating what we come to know about the dynamics of organizational ethics, unique leadership experiences, and therefore the menu of governance approaches to be deployed over time. In essence, examining *both* positive negative leader characteristics simultaneously offers a multidimensional ethical understanding of leaders, as well as a segue to new research avenues.

4 | A NEW ORTHODOXY IN ETHICS RESEARCH

Prior scholarship in business settings has examined *elements* of either SD theory *or* the DT perspective, with respect to (un)ethical aspects of leadership approaches (e.g., Hartmann & Maas, 2010; Olsen et al., 2014; Olsen & Stekelberg, 2016; Shafer & Simmons, 2008), budgetary controls (De Baerdemaeker & Bruggeman, 2015), promoting equitable exchange relationships (Galvin et al., 2010), and personal world construction (Chatterjee & Pollock, 2017). However, there is a surprising dearth of studies that investigate SD and DT characteristics simultaneously, within the context of leader ethics.

Lumpkin and Achen (2018) find leaders, who are motivated by the need for competence, autonomy, and relatedness (the three elements of SD), tend to be virtuous leaders, who develop strategies to improve their organizations. In contrast, the negative personality traits associated with narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism (the three elements of DT), when present in organizational leaders result in negative employee and organizational performance (Mathieu & Babiak, 2016) and sometimes large-scale fraud (Walker & Jackson, 2017).

This paper takes a critical lens to examine leaders' (un)ethical behavior, in an attempt to reorient existing ethics scholarship approaches. Studying positive *or* negative leader personality characteristics, to improve organizational outcomes creates an incomplete view of leaders. Not only are these connotations value laden but they gloss over the need to explore both sides of the personality coin and situational cues which activate particular personality traits. Yes, it may be enticing to study darker personality characteristics in isolation or virtuous to study positive personality characteristics independently. However, practitioners and scholars of ethics deserve a more comprehensive picture.

This paper offers three contributions. First, we provide a detailed approach (and associated codebook) to investigate both sides of the personality coin, in future ethics studies. Second, we demonstrate the efficacy of our methodological claim through an empirical case study of an organizational leader. Third, we offer a scholarly roadmap with four avenues of critical ethics research for the future. This roadmap stakes out ways to improve the field of ethics as well as organizational accountability and governance.

TABLE 2 Codebook for dark triad elements

Term	Definitions
Narcissism	
Kohut (2009)	• Grandiosity, pride, egotism, and a lack of empathy
Błachnio et al. (2016)	• Personality trait that manifests itself in an infatuation and obsession with oneself and in an aspiration to attain self-gratification, achieve dominance, and satisfy ambition
Short Dark Triad Scale (SD3), (Jones & Paulhus, 2014)	• People see me as a natural leader
	• Enjoy being the center of attention
	• Many group activities tend to be dull without me
	• Know that I am special because everyone keeps telling me so
	• Like to get acquainted with important people
	• Am not embarrassed if someone compliments me
	• Have been compared to famous people
	• More than average person
	• Insist on getting the respect I deserve
The Dirty Dozen (DD), (Jonason & Webster, 2010)	• Want others to admire me
	• Want others to pay attention to me
	• Seek prestige or status
	• Expect special favors from others
Machiavellianism	
Dahling et al. (2009); Jakobwitz and Egan (2006)	• Characterized by behaviors such as exploitation of others, through manipulative tactics, combined with a disregard for morality and a focus on self-interest
Wilson et al. (1998)	• Withhold and share information strategically, and avoid cooperation in favor of exploitative behaviors
Short Dark Triad Scale (SD3), (Jones & Paulhus, 2014)	• It's not wise to tell your secrets
	• Like to use clever manipulation to get my way
	• Whatever it takes, you must get the important people on your side.
	• Avoid direct conflict with others because they may be useful in the future
	• It's wise to keep track of information that you can use against people later
	• You should wait for the right time to get back at people
	• There are things you should hide from other people to preserve your reputation
	• Make sure your plans benefit yourself, not others
	• Most people can be manipulated
The Dirty Dozen (DD), (Jonason & Webster, 2010)	• Have used deceit or lied to get my way
	• Tend to manipulate others to get my way
	• Have used flattery to get my way
	• Tend to exploit others toward my own end
Psychopathy	
Skeem et al. (2011)	• Characterized by enduring antisocial behavior, impulsivity, selfishness, callousness, and remorselessness
Cleckley, (2011); Cooke and Michie (2001)	• Described as having an arrogant and deceitful interpersonal style, deficient affective experience, as well as impulsive and irresponsible behavior
Hare et al. (2013); Gummelt et al. (2012)	• Individuals that possess a dearth of basic prosocial personality traits such as empathy, guilt, and perspective-taking and exhibit glibness, superficial charm, grandiosity, deception, and the tendency to manipulate others

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Term	Definitions
Short Dark Triad Scale (SD3), (Jones & Paulhus, 2014)	• Like to get revenge on authorities
	• Seek out dangerous situations
	• Payback needs to be quick and nasty
	• People often say I'm out of control
	• It's true that I can be mean to others
	• People who mess with me always regret it
	• Get into trouble with the law
	• Enjoy having sex with people I hardly know
	• Say anything to get what I want
The Dirty Dozen (DD), (Jonason & Webster, 2010)	• Lack remorse
	• Tend to be callous or insensitive
	• Tend to not be too concerned with morality or the morality of my actions
	• Tend to be cynical

FIGURE 1 Textual evidence. Number of meaning units identified for each component of SD and DT theories and the standardized results based on the total page count. SD theory consists of competence (C), autonomy (A), and relatedness (R). DT theory consists of narcissism (N), Machiavellianism (M), and psychopathy (P)
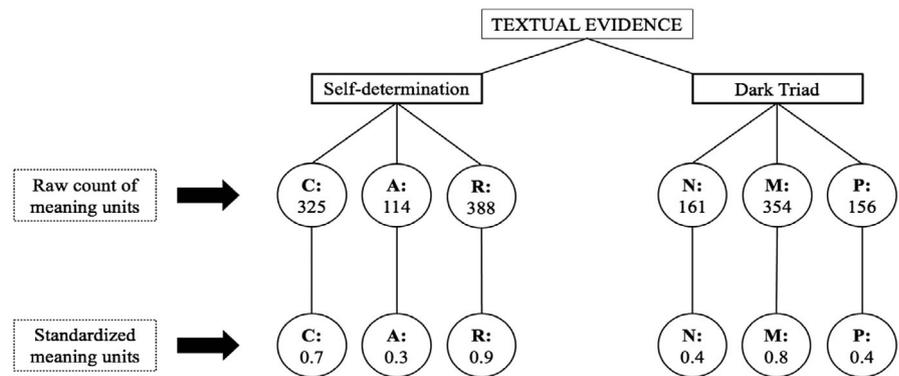
Most importantly this paper responds to calls for methods that foster deeper ethical analysis (Greenwood & Freeman, 2018), as well as calls to provide foundational opportunities to improve the questions we ask about leadership and ethics (Palanski et al., 2019). In line with Greenwood and Freeman, (2018) we ask critical and hard questions about existing ethics methodologies, that if true would have a significant impact on the depth and epistemic awareness of ethical thinking. This also aligns with (Palanski et al., 2019) by offering a quantitative way to build research at the intersection of business, ethics, and leadership. As such, we add to research on the leadership traits-outcomes nexus and how leaders can shape the ethical culture within organizations.

4.1 | Governance that inspires

Leader and organizational controls are needed to successfully govern and steer leaders in positive directions. Well-constructed controls for leaders can activate SD traits while suppressing DT traits over time. Based on our findings, we highlight the need for ethics and governance scholars to carefully consider controls for both SD and DT traits of leaders. The critical suggestion is to consider such scholarship from temporal and situation perspectives as SD and DT leader traits may ebb and flow at different times and in different situations within the organization. One example would be to build

on the work of Chenhall et al. (2017) and Simons (1995) who posit the need to guide and inspire actions. Many leaders are driven by a sense of stewardship and a desire to behave in a socially responsible manner (Davis et al., 1997; Kreutzer & Jacobs, 2011). In these situations, stewardship is a belief that leaders, left to their own devices, will act in altruistic and participative manners, utilizing the assets of their organizations to best serve beneficiaries.

More research on personality governance that fosters values, ideologies, and beliefs is needed (Kraus et al., 2017) but with an equal emphasis on motivating leader efforts with accountability for DT personality aspects. This type of research will help to build stronger relationships and deeper bonds of trust between leaders and board members, as effective mechanisms of segueing into refined accountability systems are established. Said another way, more research is needed on how and to what effect more clearly articulated values and beliefs will guide leaders and foster a willingness to be accountable to early-stage stakeholders.

4.2 | Risk-taking governance

As more stakeholders (i.e., board members, employees, volunteers, and donors) begin to emerge and engage with a growing organization, opportunities arise to coach and assist the leader with scale,

TABLE 3 Coding sources[a]

| | Account #1 | | | | | | Account #2 | | | | | | Account #3 | | | | | |
| | SD | | | DT | | | SD | | | DT | | | SD | | | DT | | |
	C	A	R	N	M	P	C	A	R	N	M	P	C	A	R	N	M	P
Raw count of meaning units	184	77	329	110	7	61	78	26	52	39	245	88	63	11	7	12	102	7
Standardized meaning units	0.6	0.2	1.0	0.3	0	0.2	1.1	0.4	0.7	0.5	3.3	1.2	1.5	0.3	0.2	0.3	2.5	0.5
Standardized total	1.8			0.5			2.2			5.0			2.0			3.3		
Standardized delta	+1.3						−2.8						−1.3					

[a]Number of meaning units in each data source: Account #1, Account #2, and Account #3. SD motivators consist of competence (C), autonomy (A), and relatedness (R). DT personality traits consist of narcissism (N), Machiavellianism (M), and psychopathy (P). Standardized total is the sum of the standardized meaning units (eg., Account #1 SD is 0.6 + 0.2 + 1.0 = 1.8). Standardized delta is the difference between SD and DT for each account (eg., Account #1 SD - DT is 1.8 - 0.5 = 1.3).

risk mitigation, and cause justification (Kreutzer & Jacobs, 2011). To align stakeholder visions both SD and DT leader characteristics need to be kept in check. In this sense, research is not absolute on how leader governance should support maximum autonomy while holding individuals accountable and thus minimizing DT trait-related behavior.

One avenue would be to draw on the performance measurement scholarship to expand on the SD and DT personality trait conversation (Davila & Foster, 2007; Kreutzer & Jacobs, 2011). Thus, deeper understanding and greater measurement of relationships between board members and leaders may aid in avoiding situations where negative motivations emerge. For example, at the organic stages of organizational growth, excessive or comprehensive controls may hinder leaders' motivations to do good deeds because of the time commitment, organization complexity, and skill set required. But without a simultaneously growing menu of accountability, collective ideology, and organizational direction may become unhinged. If clear expectations, with the means for validation, (performance measurement) are established (between the leader and board members), leader relatedness can be developed alongside bonds of trust and compliance.

4.3 | Balancing informal and formal governance controls

Organizational controls play a critical role in organizational governance and accountability (Chenhall et al., 2017; Simons, 1995; Wellens & Jegers, 2014). Kennedy (2019) notes that governance is widely accepted as necessary but is extremely complicated in practice. O'Leary (2017) posits that to fully appreciate the accountability efforts of organizations, the underlying motivations, and intentions of the actors within each organization must be understood. This is especially the case when leaders shape and are part of the governance structure. A greater understanding of how to balance organizational controls for both good and bad leader personality characteristics is needed (Kreutzer & Jacobs, 2011). O'Dwyer and Boomsma (2015) posit that organization leaders and stakeholders such as funders should work together to construct meaningful and effective accountability measures. Combined with O'Leary (2017), the O'Dwyer and Boomsma (2015) study, offers a roadmap to build accountability structures around multiple aspects of leader personality.

The consequence of ignoring the importance of articulating precise expectations may activate DT traits, which in turn opens organizations to franchise risk. In such instances, DT traits in leaders can spark moral self-licensing, as evidenced by leaders' opportunistic behavior in which their prior good works lead them to feel entitled to use organizational resources for their personal benefit. Research that explains the balance of formal and informal governance in the face of organizational growth is limited, and so too is precise accountability and rules for handling organization funds during a sudden growth of funds. Spikes in funding,

attributable to the leader, in tandem with a more fully developed governance structure, are needed and hard to achieve (Davila & Foster, 2007; Kreutzer & Jacobs, 2011). In the absence of formal control structures and enforcement mechanisms, funds often are misappropriated, which is consistent with Machiavellianism. Behavioral guidelines must be both documented and articulated. Specific research on preventing negative leader behavior without discouraging positive behavior is needed. In creating controls at this organizational stage, consideration must be given to balancing motivators so there will be a greater likelihood of compliance (Chenhall et al., 2017; Kreutzer & Jacobs, 2011; Long, 2018).

4.4 | Governance in crisis

Without considering governance for both SD *and* DT leader characteristics, governance systems are incomplete and will often lead to reactionary measures. Rather than focusing on crisis management strategies (Andon & Free, 2012), which are inherently reactionary measures in both words and actions (Coombs, 2015), to prevent the loss of organizational legitimacy, more ethics research is needed to determine ways to encourage leaders to constantly reassess their intentions and motivations, as a means of improving relationships, transparency, and trust (O'Leary, 2017). If a crisis occurs in an organization because of DT leader characteristics and actions, trust is diminished, and reputation damage occurs.

If the leader's actions are the cause of the crisis, efforts to ward off opportunistic behavior have failed. At this point it is too late; damage control now becomes the best option. O'Leary (2017, p.23) suggests, "...particular accounting practices can become an intrinsic part of the accountability effort itself by enabling the realization of certain promises and responsibilities beyond the provision of accounts." New research focusing on controls in times of crisis, by challenging espoused logic, is a fruitful area of scholarship (Gamble et al., 2019).

4.5 | Future studies

Prior studies, which apply psychological theories to leader governance often limited their focus to either positive or negative aspects of personality and motivations, rather than investigating both aspects together. This limited focus may lead to misspecification of organizational leadership and accountability problems, misdiagnosed outcomes, or missed research questions altogether. Prior scholarship has identified that good deeds and morally questionable behavior are not mutually exclusive (Blanken et al., 2015; Merritt et al., 2010).

Overall, future studies could take a behavioral approach to understand SD and DT in tandem, to develop leader governance and control approaches as an organization grows (Kennedy, 2019). This approach would enable the scholarly community to more fully explore leader SD motivators for achieving competency, autonomy, and relatedness, which generally are associated with socially responsible behavior (Gagne, 2003), and the DT traits of narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy, which are associated with dysfunctional behavior (Boddy, 2017; Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007). We offer a validated codebook to accomplish this (see Tables 1 and 2). Including *both* SD and DT traits in future ethics studies and exploring the factors that activate these traits, will widen our understanding of organizational leaders. Appreciating the reality that both SD and DT are present to degrees and types provides numerous research avenues for ethics scholars.

4.6 | Practical ethics implications

Our findings ultimately serve practitioners and policymakers, by encouraging the establishment of governance mechanisms that promote socially desirable behavior and reduce dysfunctional behavior. Governance mechanisms can encourage competence, autonomy, and relatedness by fostering positive feedback, creating opportunities to choose how to perform tasks, and building a sense of shared responsibility (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Van den Broeck et al., 2010). Further, a governance mechanism, which suppresses dark personality traits will reduce bullying, create greater sharing of information, and increase ethical behavior (Bailey, 2015; Jonason & Zeigler-Hill, 2018).

Leadership is often mixed with a range of (un)ethical personality characteristics and motivations. The psychological leadership tensions we identify are not unique to our case. Even a cursory scan of news media would corroborate the case study findings described herein. The personality and ethical orientation of business leaders are not one-dimensional (e.g., a leaders' narcissism and its impact on risky decisions) and are value laden. As such, practitioners and policymakers need solutions that embrace this ethical and governance reality.

For example, organizations need strong but flexible systems in place to manage the SD and DT motivators of leaders, as the organization moves through each life cycle stage. Without strong, flexible diagnostic and interactive governance, organizations increase the likelihood of unacceptable behavior developing. In line with Merritt et al. (2010) we find evidence that a leader behaved in socially responsible ways in the early years of the organization, but later appeared to believe he was morally licensed to engage in questionable actions. This SD-DT duality is both fascinating and understudied.

5 | CONCLUSION

Leaders play an important role in organizational outcomes. All leaders are complex, diverse, and not without flaws. This paper takes a critical perspective view on how we understand aspects of (un)ethical organizational leadership. Existing methodological approaches may impede epistemological aspects of ethics scholarship and how we come to understand organizational ethics. Drawing on psychology literature related to self-determination theory and the Dark Triad perspective this paper focuses on the

need to balance both sides of the personality coin with a heterodox approach. Using content analysis and case study insights, a research agenda is presented, that incorporates underlying motivations and intentions of leaders (SD and DT) with needed governance mechanisms within organizations.

KEYWORDS

Dark Triad, ethics heterodoxy, governance, research methods, self-determination

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have declared no conflict of interest.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

All procedures were performed in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

INFORMED CONSENT

Informed consent was not necessary for this study. All data were gathered from publicly available documents. obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

PEER REVIEW

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Edward N. Gamble[1] 🔵
Anne L. Christensen[2] 🔵

[1]*Grossman School of Business, University of Vermont, Burlington, Vermont, USA*
[2]*Jake Jabs College of Business and Entrepreneurship, Montana State University, Bozeman, Montana, USA*

Correspondence
Edward N. Gamble, Grossman School of Business, University of Vermont, 55 Colchester Avenue, Burlington, VT 05405, USA.
Email: edward.n.gamble@gmail.com

ENDNOTE

[1] Sevceen offered for interpreting kappa values. Cicchetti (1994) offers the following convention: 0.75–1.00 excellent; 0.60–0.74 good; 0.40–0.59 fair; and 0.40 poor.

ORCID

Edward N. Gamble 🔵 https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6127-377X
Anne L. Christensen 🔵 https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0934-2571

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Edward N. Gamble is an Assistant Professor of Accounting at the Grossman School of Business (GSB) at the University of Vermont. He teaches financial accounting with a specific focus on financial statement literacy and business sustainability. His research focuses on ways that accounting and finance can be utilized to reduce social, environmental, and economic inequalities.

Anne L. Christensen is a Professor Emerita at the Jake Jabs College of Business at Montana State University. Her research focuses on ethics and taxpayer compliance.