

Leadership in Chaotic Change

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Leadership in Chaotic Change

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## **Dedication**

This study is dedicated to the leaders who lift others higher, whose humility, inspiration, and service creates spaces where people can thrive. You illuminate what leadership could be. This study is also dedicated to the leaders whose ego, ambition, and disregard for others cause harm. Your choices reveal the cost of leadership without empathy and strengthened my commitment to understanding what makes organizations resilient. To the best and the worst of leadership. Together they have taught me what matters in leading others through times of change.

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## **Abstract of Dissertation**

In 2020, the world was struck with the most significant pandemic in 100 years. During this time, organizations struggled to achieve their organizational goals in the context of uncontrollable internal and external upheaval, known as chaotic change. The COVID-19 pandemic showed that leaders and their organizations were unprepared for the upheaval they would face during chaotic change.

Leadership theory, research, and practice have long been situated in the context of stable organizations and rational external environments. Theories of leadership including Servant Leadership and Narcissistic Leadership were developed within the context of this stability. Servant Leadership has been a popular topic of leadership development, and narcissism in leadership has often been showcased as an example of bad leadership. However, they were not tested in the context of chaotic change, and through the perception of leaders in these context.

The purpose of this study was to explore leader perception of leadership characteristics during times of chaotic change, like COVID-19. To explore this, I asked “What are leaders’ perceptions of effective leadership characteristics in times of chaotic change?” This study was grounded in the constructs of Narcissistic Leadership, Servant Leadership, and used Q-Sort methodology. Participants were asked to sort 44 servant and Narcissistic Leadership characteristics from most effective to least, within the context of the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Results were analyzed and a three-factor solution emerged.

This study showed that not only do leaders perceive both Servant and Narcissistic Leadership characteristics to be effective during times of chaotic change, but also that

there are different styles of leadership that can be effective in the context of chaotic change events like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Implications for future research include the need for more nuanced models of leadership that use a variety of leadership characteristics, the examination of these models in a variety of contexts, as well as the use of new investigative techniques, like Q-  
Sort methodology, to explore the experiences and perception of actual leaders in organizations. While this study was implemented in the context of COVID-19, the context of chaotic change events remains highly relevant to organizations today and into the future.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview

Here's to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently. They're not fond of rules. And they have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, disbelieve them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing that you can't do, is ignore them. Because they change things. They invent. They imagine. They heal. They explore. They create. They inspire. They push the human race forward. Maybe they have to be crazy. How else can you stare at an empty canvas and see a work of art? Or, sit in silence and hear a song that hasn't been written? Or, gaze at a red planet and see a laboratory on wheels? We make tools for these kinds of people. While some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the ones who are crazy enough to think that they can change the world, are the ones who do. (Apple, Inc., 1997)

The purpose of this study was to explore, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, what leadership characteristics leaders perceive to be effective in leading their organizations through times of chaotic change. In the context of chaotic change, using opposing constructs of servant leadership and narcissistic leadership characteristics, I sought to better understand how these characteristics were viewed by leaders, which characteristics were considered effective in the context of a chaotically changing environment, and how both servant leadership and narcissistic leadership might be used together to achieve organizational goals.

The last 10 years have shown how necessary leadership is in chaotic times.

The complexity of the past decades has forced business organizations to be lean and agile....Many still largely operate in outdated governance and political systems mired in bureaucracy and cronyism that work against collaborating for the greater good, resulting in countless unnecessary deaths and a traumatized healthcare workforce –the consequences of which we will be dealing with for years. (Uhl-Bien, 2021, p.1400)

All the while, the leadership development industry is worth \$366 billion (Westfall, 2019), producing books and programs every year encouraging those in positions of authority to become “good leaders,” to develop a transformational leadership style (Burns, 1978), inspirational leadership style (Downton, 1973), charismatic

leadership style (Weber, 1988), or servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1970), based largely on the prevailing scholarship in this field. In her book *The End of Leadership*, scholar-practitioner Barbara Kellerman (2012) rebuked the leadership industrial complex for this ineffectiveness in understanding and facilitating leadership. She contended that, in the last 40 years, a large and profitable system had been built around the limiting ideas that leadership was static, could be taught quickly and easily, and that there was one true path, regardless of context (Kellerman, 2018). These practical leadership development limitations are informed by theories that only rely on a small array of characteristics (Yukl, 1999), while ignoring the complexity of human character, including the dark side of each of us. Although interest in leadership is more important than ever, leadership practices are becoming more ineffective (Gurdjian & Halbeisen, 2014; Kellerman, 2012) because they often do not explore a wide enough variety of leadership characteristics known by leaders to be effective, the context in which they are used, or the preferences of leaders in choosing their actions.

For organizations today, constant and often chaotic change is the new normal. Chaotic change is the “change in an organization, when the external and internal complexity and uncertainty is too high to predict or control the future development by management of the organization” (Karp & Helgo, 2008a, p. 86). The COVID-19 pandemic is an especially impactful example of the impact of uncontrollable internal and external change (Karp & Helgo, 2008a). In recent years, there can be no more chaotic situation for organizations than a pandemic. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, uncertainty and constant change has made it important to understand the relationship between leadership characteristics and efficacy, especially in the context of chaotic

change (Bar Am et al., 2020; Uhl-Bein, 2021). Most leaders, however, did not emerge to generate new solutions during the pandemic. In a McKinsey study by Bar Am et al. (2020), only 21% of executives believed they had the expertise, resources, and commitment to achieve organizational growth over the first 12 months of the pandemic (p. 4), while only 47% of executives believed they had the expertise, resources, and commitment to maintain core functions. The leadership that allows for emergence and adaptation is different from the leadership that is useful in more stable organizations at more stable times.

For the majority of history, leadership meant learning from the carefully curated biographies of leaders (Bennis, 2007). These anecdotal examples skewed heavily towards what those leaders did well, ignoring their mistakes and short-comings (Kellerman, 2012). Eventually, this preference for positive examples influenced the study of leadership. Yukl (1999) criticized these models because they lacked a comprehensive set of characteristics, as well as any indication of the context in which they were used or might be used again. Yukl explained that, although there may never be a comprehensive set of effective leadership characteristics, many popular leadership models still ignored significant pieces (p. 290). Avolio and Gardner (2005), when developing the authentic leadership model, described studying only positive modeling, values, and characteristics despite studies that showed leaders who exhibit a broad array of leadership characteristics are more likely to accomplish their goals and bring positive outcomes to their organizations and the people in them, particularly in times of uncertainty, as suggested by Kaplan and Kaiser (2003). Realistically, people cannot remain positive at all times, not every situation can be addressed through positive characteristics. A more inclusive

leadership model that includes a broader array of leadership characteristics would give more leaders the opportunity to succeed in positions of leadership in a broader array of contexts. The answer to the challenges of leadership in organizations during times of chaotic change may lie in a combination of these leadership constructs and their characteristics, as well as an understanding of how they might be used in different contexts to positive effect.

By removing an entire category of leadership characteristics from examination, we not only exclude a portion of people from success in leadership roles, but we also become more prone to experiencing toxic leadership brought about by those who are unaware of their leadership style. In his collected works, Carl Jung (2014) stated that we all have a shadow, and by not embracing it, we give it more power. So, too, by ignoring the dark side of leadership, do we risk falling into the shadows of other leadership styles. Yet, by examining a broader set of characteristics, leadership theory can present a more expansive development toolkit from which leaders could draw skills, and their authentic impulses can be used to create effective team strategies.

### **Statement of the Problem**

A rapidly changing leadership landscape, impacted by chaotic change events like technological revolution, pandemics, and wars, is no longer supported by leadership models that were designed for more stable times and have not adapted to reflect the current needs of organizations (Bennis, 2007; Kellerman, 2018; Uhl-Bein, 2007). The most popular leadership models, like servant leadership, do not reflect many of the successful leaders we actually see in organizations today (Kellerman, 2004, 2018). These models do not incorporate a full range of leadership characteristics that reflect the

psychological complexity of leaders (Yammarino, 2013), they do not adequately explore the impact of context on the efficacy of these leadership characteristics (Kaiser et al., 2008), and they do not reflect the perception of leaders and their experience in using these characteristics effectively because leaders have largely been excluded from research (Kellerman, 2018). Therefore, current leadership models do not support leadership in current organizations.

The seminal works of Stogdill (1948), Avolio (2006, 2007), Yukl et al. (2005), Yukl and Mahsud (2010), Bass (1990, 2008), and Uhl-Bein et al. (2007) have provided a comprehensive definition of leadership that can be operationalized in academic studies as well as put into practice in organization.

Leadership is a complex, multidimensional, emergent process in which the leader(s), follower(s), and other formal and informal stakeholders in a human enterprise use their characteristics, capabilities, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to create mutually influencing relationships that enable them to coevolve strategies, tactics, structures, processes, directions, and other methods of building and managing human enterprises with the goal of producing adaptive success in their chosen niche(s) in the competitive, evaluative, and evolving global ecology of organizations. (Kilburg & Donohue, 2011, p. 15)

Despite this definition, leadership models do not reflect this requisite complexity. They do not accommodate many characteristics, capabilities, thoughts, and feelings of leaders, do not consider the evolving global ecology of leadership, and are not based on leader experiences. Recent changes in the world have shown this to be a glaring problem, in not only the leadership development industry, but also in the academic industry that supports it. For years, some researchers have shone a spotlight on the gap between popular leadership models and the needs of organizations.

...one-sized leadership, even transformational leadership, is not always most desirable for innovation. They summarized the innate paradoxes with innovative activities, such as explorative and exploitative, knowledge generation and knowledge integration, idea generation and idea implementation. As such, they

argued for the need for ambidextrous leadership, characterized by flexibly adapting to the changing demands and maintaining equilibrium in the conflicting demands. (Wang et al., 2011, p.336)

Over the last six decades, leadership theory has focused on these individual elements of leadership but has yet to fully integrate them into a model (Kilburg & Donohue, 2011). Trait theory, path/goal situational theory, style/behavior theory, skills capacities theory, ecological systems theory, relationship/LMX theory, effectiveness/outcome theory, and ethical moral theory (Kilburg Donohue, 2011) have all been examined. Without a comprehensive understanding of the characteristics that leaders are using and why, leadership theory will never reflect leadership in practice, rendering it less informative and less effective.

Current leadership research is most commonly studied from an objectivist and positivist point of view. The earliest leadership studies began with trait theory and examined the characteristics of “great men” to find shared, observable attributes that could be generalized to and cultivated in others. Smelser and Baltes (2001) suggested,

This theory holds that there is one best way to lead and that deeply seated personality variables allow certain people to master that best way. According to this theory, there are a number of universal characteristics of personality that determine a leader's effectiveness, without regard to behavior in a given situation. Because leadership is viewed as a set of relatively stable and enduring personal traits or physical properties, specific personality characteristics distinguish effective from ineffective leaders. (pp. 8573-8578)

However, as Manfred Kets De Vries (Smelser & Baltes, 2001) observed, the process of quantifying these observable attributes was challenged by construct issues and measurement limitations alike. The field all but abandoned trait theory, but never their desire to find a solution to universal leadership. Even today, leadership studies use limited constructs and overly simplistic behaviors to not only infer the personality of a leader, but also to predict the outcome of their actions. The challenge in this approach is

to think that leadership decisions are driven solely by a leader's personality traits, or that leadership decisions driven by personality traits are inherently less effective. Fiedler (1967) asserted that

Instead of taking the position that leadership traits or behaviors are applicable to any situation, those supporting the contingency theory claim that the emergence of any one style is contingent on the environment in which the leader is operating. According to this point of view, the most effective leader is the one who is able to adapt his or her actions depending on the situation. In the model of one of the most prominent advocates of this point of view, the effectiveness of task- or relationship-oriented leaders depends on the favorableness of the situation as defined by the power of their position, the task structure, and the quality of the leader-member relationship. (p. 14)

The topic of leadership is “broad, dynamic, relational, and contextually driven” (Day et al., 2014, p. 3) and there are many personality characteristics that can impact leadership effectiveness, depending on those dynamics, relationships, and context. Previous research into personality and leadership assumed that the relationship between personality and leadership effectiveness was linear (Day et al., 2014). Recent literature put forth a more nuanced approach. “Reviews linking dark personality and leadership have suggested the relationship is more complex than pointing to dark personality as a derailment” (Spain et al., 2013, p. S47), and recent studies showed that there are bright sides to dark characteristics (Judge et al., 2009). However, there was a limited amount of empirical research regarding the characteristics of effective dark leadership and how actual leaders utilize those traits.

A number of theorists, such as Jay Conger, Michael Maccoby, Warren Bennis, and Manfred Kets DeVries, suggested that we turn our attention to dark leadership characteristics because dark leaders often rise to positions of prominence and have transformational impacts on their organizations. Dark leadership is frequently used to describe the Dark Triad leadership model of personalities, which all have the “common

features of self-centered thinking, social exploitativeness, superficial emotions, disagreeableness, and low levels of honesty and humility” (Fejes et al., 2020, p. 526). The Dark Triad includes subclinical narcissism, Machiavellianism, and subclinical, also known as corporate, psychopathy (Spain et al., 2013). While it is not yet clear what a broader, more nuanced model of leadership would consist of, leadership theorists like Kets DeVries, Maccoby, and Conger suggest research look to the dark side: the Dark Triad (Paulhus & Williams, 2002), and towards narcissism in particular.

Narcissism alone is unique in the Dark Triad because of its multifaceted nature (Fatouta, 2019). While the counterproductive attributes of narcissism “can be characterized by a grandiose sense of self-worth, feelings of entitlement, and preoccupation with fantasies of unlimited brilliance, power, or success..., it can also entail some beneficial interpersonal qualities including charmingness, self-assuredness, and popularity,” (Fatouta, 2019, p. 1) which can be paradoxically perceived by followers as both toxicity and charisma (Liu et al., 2021). Subclinical narcissism is also a normal part of psychological development (Freud, 1914), and a predictor of leader emergence (Brunell et al., 2008, Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007). At its core, narcissism stems from deep feelings of inadequacy (Freud, 1914), which leads to a need to become what Freud called the “ego ideal” (p. 32), experienced only in the simpler times of childhood. The response to this need can be healthy (Kohut, 1984) or malignant (Kernberg, 1995), grandiose (Miller et al., 2011) or vulnerable (Miller et al., 2017), but is often associated with leadership emergence (Brunell et al., 2008), positive perception by followers (Braun, 2017), and when successful is perceived by followers as charisma (Bass, 2008; Braun, 2017; Liu et al. 2021). In order to contrast narcissistic leadership characteristics,

the widely studied new leadership theory provides a clearly opposing leadership style known as servant leadership. These opposing perspectives underscore a critical gap in leadership research, and addressing this gap establishes the foundation for the present study.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore, in the context of the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic, what leadership characteristics leaders perceive to be effective in leading their organizations through times of chaotic change. In times of chaotic change, the impact of leadership becomes even more pressing (Bennis, 2007) as organizations are expected to provide stability even in the face of uncertainty. Leadership theory has bifurcated leadership into “good” and “bad,” and after extensive research, teaching, and development, results have varied (Kellerman, 2014).

### **Research Question**

What are leaders’ perceptions of effective leadership characteristics in times of chaotic change?

### **Statement of Significance**

This study has significance both to theory and practice in several ways. In regard to theory, this study expanded the understanding of leadership by incorporating the additional complexity required to more accurately understand the phenomenon of effective leadership. Leadership research has almost exclusively focused on the bright side characteristics. It is still unknown what impact dark leader characteristics, particularly narcissism, have on leader effectiveness, despite clear evidence that effective dark side leaders exist and have been effective. And, according to Brunzel (2021),

...despite frequent calls to incorporate narcissism and overconfidence into economic and business theory (e.g., Miller 2015; Trigeorgis and Reuer 2017) and organizational theory in general (e.g., Campbell et al. 2010), our understanding of how these constructs—individually and in conjunction affect organizational outcomes remains limited. (p. 2)

Existing studies of narcissistic characteristics show a curious connection between narcissistic characteristics and leadership. Persons higher in narcissism are more likely to emerge as leaders (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007), narcissism can be beneficial for followers (Brunzel, 2020) because narcissistic leaders meet a psychological need in the follower (Lipman-Blumen, 2005), and narcissism is particularly appealing to followers in times of uncertainty and chaos (Maccoby, 2003). “During turbulent political times, narcissists like Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Napoleon Bonaparte, Charles de Gualle, Mao Tse-tung, and Mohandas Gandhi have brought about sweeping changes. Productive narcissists are wired for periods of rapid and disruptive change” (Maccoby, p. 10). Narcissistic leaders are “happier than most, less socially anxious, and less depressed...they feel less guilt and shame...they have higher self-esteem...feel closer to their ideal selves and think that they are smarter and better looking than others” (Campbell, 2001, p. 214). Leaders higher in narcissism are likely to have higher firm performance, are more likely to invest in research and development, tend to be highly risk tolerant, and garner a lot of public attention and even acclaim (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007). Despite this, very little academic research incorporates the complexity, experience, and the context in which the organization exists into a study of effective leadership. Without these elements, leadership in theory cannot reflect leadership in practice. Individuals cannot be “some ideal prototype of an individual who is always charismatic, servant-oriented, inspiring, and otherwise exemplary. Such a framing is

overly normative and limits our appreciation for the complexities and contextualization of leadership” (Hannah et al., 2014, p. 600).

By studying the characteristics of two opposing leadership models, we can better understand the context in which those characteristics might have been displayed, as well as the perception of the actual leaders using those characteristics. These insights can be valuable to leadership research by providing a more comprehensive model of leadership characteristics that could be employed in leadership development research and practice.

In practice, those who are high in narcissism are found in every industry, and many have created and withstood great change. Maccoby (2003) suggested,

They can found a school of thought (Ayn Rand, Gerturde Stein, Sigmund Freud); a completely new aesthetic way of looking at architecture or design (Frank Lloyd Wright, Frank Gehry, Philippe Starck); or social services that engage groups of followers (Dorothy Day of the Catholic Worker movement, Mother Teresa); artistic breakthroughs (Michaelangelo, Leonardo Da Vinci, Pablo Picasso), fashion (Coco Chanel); cosmetics (Helena Rubenstein, Mary Kay); the organic food movement (Alice Waters); films and film schools (Orson Welles, Francis Ford Coppola, Stanley Kubrick); acting styles (Stella Adler, Marlon Brando); musical revolutions (Richard Wagner, Miles Davis, Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong); new religious schools (St. Augustine, St. Francis); political leadership (Churchill, De Gaulle, Stalin, Mao, FDR, LBJ, Reagan, Nixon, Clinton); literary movements (Marcel Proust, August Strindberg, James Joyce, Ernest Hemingway). (pp. 79-80)

A clear line between *good* and *bad* leadership does not exist. The leadership characteristics that were once thought as universally applicable to organizations can become obsolete. Leaders are experiencing an unprecedented amount of change within and outside of their organizations, and the industry responsible for studying the characteristics that could be effective in helping leaders lead only studies half of the characteristics and ignores the opinions of leaders almost entirely. “There is a more pressing need to understand these dark characters. Nonetheless, one intriguing possibility for future research would involve measuring both positive and dark personality traits in

the same people. We suspect that they are not polar opposites” (Paulhus, 2014, p. 424).

The world is changing and the leadership industry must change with it.

Furthermore, this study includes the context in which these leadership characteristics are being used. By including the impact of context, this study more accurately reflects the environment in which organizations, and therefore leaders, operate. These elements would inform the chaotic change leadership model. Leaders facing chaotic change would have a better understanding of the leadership characteristics they could potentially use. According to Brunzel (2020),

this is important because CEO overconfidence and narcissism research are not just mere academic or ‘interesting’ psychological constructs but shed light on the decision-making processes of top executives and their role in leadership, potentially enabling us to better understand real world phenomena such as financial crises (p. 31)

or the COVID-19 pandemic.

In times of chaotic change, leadership becomes an important part in steering the direction of the organization, and in taking care of the individual employees who are experiencing uncertainty. Learning which leadership characteristics are productive to organizations during chaotic periods can help organizations better protect themselves and their members from not only chaotic change, but also ineffective leadership.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

This section describes the conceptual frame used for this study. This study’s conceptual frame was based on the constructs of narcissistic leadership (Grijalva et al., 2015), servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1970,2008), and chaotic change (Karp & Helgo, 2008a, 2008b; 2009a, 2009b). To better understand the methodology of this study, it is helpful to understand the theoretical underpinnings of recent research in the areas of leadership.

Upper echelon theory, or upper-level management theory, is the concept that leadership has the greatest impact on organizational success. Bass (2008) asserted that their "...strategies are a product of the interaction of the individual leader and the organization's internal and external environment...Complexity is the rule, rather than the exception" (p. 682). Modern organizations rely heavily on leadership to structure themselves and achieve their goals and are heavily influenced by the scholarship around leadership theory. To this point, academic understandings of leadership have focused almost entirely on "new leadership" theories (p. 625) like charismatic leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005) transformational leadership (Bass, 2008) and servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1970), which are all leader-centric. While each of these styles of leadership have been lauded as the "ideal" by many leadership scholars and practitioners, there are other styles that are just as common, but less understood. These leadership styles are not the only effective forms of leadership.

Narcissistic leadership theory focuses on the presence and intensity of the subclinical narcissistic traits (Spain et al., 2013) in the context of leadership. Subclinical personality characteristics that do not impede an individual's ability to work, maintain relationships with others, or care for themselves and, per the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V)*, are not considered disordered, although the majority of dark leadership personality literature and assessment borrows heavily from the *DSM-V* (2013). Due to this, the academic understanding of narcissistic leadership is largely based on the clinical definition of narcissistic personality disorder, resulting in the stigma around the presence of subclinical narcissistic characteristics. Narcissistic leadership is characterized by a leader who has an excessive need for praise and

validation, exhibits fantasies of power and grandiosity, and is lacking in empathy to the detriment of those around them including their team (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). These characteristics can be valuable to organizations facing uncertainty or looking to grow, as leaders who are higher in narcissism can be innovative, charismatic, and bold in the face of adversity (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007), but over time, these leaders struggle to balance their personal need for admiration and the needs of those around them, leading to trouble for the leader and their organizations (O'Reilly & Hall, 2021).

Servant leadership is a leadership theory focused on a leader serving their followers. In 1998, Robert K. Greenleaf was prompted to write his first essay, "The Servant as Leader," by

concern for student attitudes which then—and now, although the manifestations are different—seemed low in hope. One cannot be hopeful, it seems to me, unless one accepts and believes that one can live productively in the world as it is—striving, violent, unjust as well as beautiful, caring, and supportive. (p. 21).

Greenleaf also identified a crisis of leadership; a lack of guidance that he felt would lead to more chaos in the world. As a solution to a lack of leadership in an uncertain world, Greenleaf envisioned institutions headed by leaders-as-servant, who would present mature, inspirational figures, which would then create mature and inspirational cultures to shepherd "all who are touched by them" (p. 23). Building on the work of Greenleaf, Laub (1999) developed the 80-item instrument called the Servant Organizational Leadership Assessment to operationalize the construct, and other researchers followed suit. Although characteristics of servant leadership can vary from study to study, core differentiating characteristics include morality (Liden et al., 2014; VanDierendonck, 2011), humility (Van Dierendonck, 2011), and being low in narcissism (Liden et al., 2014).

Chaotic change is the concept that organizations undergo times of unpredictable and uncontrolled internal and external change (Karp & Helgo, 2008). At this time, the clearest example of chaotic change in recent years has been the COVID-19 pandemic in the year 2020. As the world becomes more technologically advanced and interconnected, organizational change and upheaval is becoming more frequent; however, 80% of leaders believed they were not equipped to handle the first 12 months of the COVID-19 pandemic (Bar Am et al., 2020). In times of chaotic change, leadership and their organizations do not have the luxury of relying on past precedent to predict the efficacy of their actions. Leaders must make impactful decisions quickly, often in circumstances of uncertainty and fear.

### **Summary of Methodology**

This research employs Q methodology, which is an alternative methodological approach designed to quantitatively explore subjective perception in context. The Q-technique was developed by William Stephenson (1935) as a response to what he saw as a lack of practical application in the output of purely quantitative personality research. There were several issues that he, as a quantum physicist, was interested in addressing in order to find the most reliable form of research methodology. The first issue was the implicit subjectivity of all tests, assessments, and questionnaires; not the subjectivity of participants, but of researchers (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). Q methodology allows the assessment of perception in context. Participants, who are considered experts in their fields, are presented with a context to frame their sort. Initial sorts contain a number of words for them to interpret and sort into predetermined categories. These categories are weighted to create an inverted factor analysis.

After a thorough review of the literature, I compiled a comprehensive sample of both narcissistic and servant leadership characteristics, which provided subjects with a “balanced” and “broadly representative” (Watts & Stenner, 2012, p. 58) number of characteristics to rank in order of effectiveness given the context of chaotic change, like the COVID-19 pandemic. A review of narcissism in leadership revealed 18 seminal works on narcissistic leadership, and from that literature, a pool of 210 narcissistic leadership characteristics was compiled. Of the 210 individual leadership characteristics, many were redundant, others were similar, and some related. Using spatial organization, the 210 characteristics were grouped together into 31 broad characteristics. A review of servant leadership literature revealed 16 seminal pieces of literature that outline the characteristics of a servant leader. From this literature, 135 characteristics of servant leadership were compiled. Of these 135 characteristics, many were similar, and some were related. Using spatial organization, they were categorized into 32 broad characteristics. From these collections, characteristics were then narrowed to 22 servant leadership characteristics and 22 narcissistic characteristics. These characteristics are the basis for the Q set in this study.

My goal was to study leadership characteristics from the perspective of upper level executives in organizations that have experienced chaotic change because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The target population is C-Suite level executives, no more than two levels removed from the CEO and former leaders who have worked no more than two levels below the CEO in the last eight years. Through connections with high-ranking executives, who are also networked with other individuals meeting my selection criteria, I recruited others to my study through a snowball sampling process. The value of using a Q

methodology in this case is that it is a considerably unobtrusive research process for subjects and can be easily completed at the subject's convenience. Q methodology requires a sample size of between 14 and 30 people.

In order to collect data, I created a survey sort using Q-Sort Touch Tool (<https://qsortouch.com/>) that allowed participants easy and user-friendly access to the process for the most accurate result and highest levels of participation. Because there is no hierarchy in the survey process, all surveys can be administered at once, completed at the subject's convenience and submitted at any time. Participants were asked to answer a short demographic questionnaire after completing the sort. Participants were also given follow-up, open-ended questions after their sort in order to collect further qualitative data about their perceptions of the leadership characteristics they have just sorted. Participants were given the option to participate in a follow-up interview to be scheduled after their sort. The method of analysis is a standard factor analysis using the values produced by each set of sorted data. From there, I extrapolated which items in the sort had the most statistical significance.

As with design, analysis, validity, and reliability, Q-methodology utilizes different criteria when understanding and addressing trustworthiness. Guba (1981) stated more and more investigators have become convinced of the relative utility of the naturalistic paradigm for studying that class of phenomena that is often called social/behavioral. Social/behavioral phenomena exist chiefly in the minds of people, and there are as many realities as persons. (p. 77)

Measuring phenomena that exists in the minds of people is the purpose of Q-methodology and requires trustworthiness measurements that reflect this methodology.

Using Q methodology, this study established a deeper understanding of the characteristics that leaders perceive as effective during times of uncontrolled internal and external change, also known as chaotic change (Karp & Helgo, 2008), in order to affect

more productive leadership within organizations in the future. “Using Q methodology, to conclude, does not entail a denial of microlevel communicative pragmatics, nor of macrolevel social structures. Rather it entails a focus on subjectively expressed, socially organized semantic patterns...” (Watts & Stenner, 2005, p. 86).

### **Delimitations**

This study used Q methodology, which has several delimiters. First, this was a study of leaders’ perception of leadership that relied on a population delimited to C-suite leaders of organizations. In order to participate, selected leaders must have been in their strategic decision-making positions prior to the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and had to have been leading their organizations through the first two years of the pandemic. For the purpose of this study, I defined this period as March 2020 to March 2021. Lastly, leaders were selected by a formal executive recruitment process through professional networks. Only leaders with contacts in those networks had the opportunity to participate.

Q methodology also requires that participants share their perception of a limited number of statements, those statements being drawn from the literature on two styles of leadership. This means that results only included the characteristics included from the literature, not the entirety of characteristics the leaders would have been exposed to in their experience.

### **Limitations**

Q methodology has several limitations that impact this study and its application to leadership in organizations. Q methodology results are subjective and are meant to be. The purpose of Q is to understand the perspectives of the individuals participating in the

study. The results of this study were not necessarily meant to be generalizable to a large population. Instead, they showed that there are individuals who perceive these constructs in a variety of ways. As Q-methodology was the study of perception, these results of this methodology were limited to the subjective perception of these leaders, not objective facts necessarily.

Q samples are designed to be tightly bound for ease of sorting. In this study, however, it was necessary to have a comprehensive set of characteristics for both narcissistic and servant leadership. In developing this Q sample, it became clear that there would be 44 total statements to sort, which could lead to challenges for participants, including assessment fatigue and confusion.

Additionally, this study included open-ended questions after the Q-Sort and the option to participate in a 30-minute interview after the completion of the Q-Sort activity. Interviews have additional limitations due to the time constraints, unfamiliarity of participants with the researcher and the constructs being studied, and the challenges of discussing events that took place in 2020 five years later. Participants may have been hesitant to discuss certain experiences with an unfamiliar interviewer, may have constructed answers based on the researcher's responses, both explicit or inferred, or may have not remember their experiences fully.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

This section provides definitions for the key terms included in this study. These key terms have their roots in psychology, leadership, management science, and organizational development.

**Bright leadership:** Leadership that is widely considered to be positive in nature and includes emotional intelligence, self-regulation, and empathy (Fioravante, 2013).

Bright leadership is portrayed in the literature as effective in all contexts.

**Chaotic change:** A period of simultaneous internal and external change (Karp & Helgo, 2008a, 2009a).

**Clinical narcissism:** A diagnosable psychological disorder, characterized by a need for admiration, patterns of grandiosity, and a lack of empathy (DSM-V, 2013).

**Concourse of communication:** A concourse of communication, or concourse, is a collection of statements that encompass the majority of knowledge on a particular subject, which is then narrowed into a Q sample that participants sort during a Q methodology study (McKeown & Thomas, 2013).

**Condition of instruction:** Conditions of instruction are designed to serve as a guide and create a context, through which participants can participate in the Q-Sorting.

**COVID-19 pandemic:** A chaotic change event that began in early 2020 and continued for years, where a previously unknown strain of the COVID virus caused widespread illness and death around the world, leading to unexpected and uncontrollable internal and external changes in organizations (Uhl-Bein, 2021).

**Dark leadership:** Leadership styles, including narcissism, Machiavellianism, and secondary psychopathy, that are widely considered to be entirely ineffective and often harmful in organizations (Harms et al., 2011).

**Effective leadership:** A leader who is able to understand and operate their organizations in the present, as well as foreseeing future demands of organizational resources (Hannah et al., 2014).

**Healthy narcissism:** A level of narcissism that is considered subclinical, does not rise to the degree of a disorder, and may have some benefits for the individual and those around them (Kohut, 1984).

**Leadership:** Building and maintaining a group of people who have been persuaded to give up their time and effort to achieve a common goal for the group. (Kaiser, et al. 2008)

**Leadership characteristics:** The attributes of leadership in practice, which can include attitudes, skills, behaviors, and personality traits (Kaplan Sorenson, 2016).

**Malignant narcissism:** An aggressive and almost always destructive form of narcissism that is almost always directed at objects around the narcissist (Kernberg, 2014).

**Narcissism:** A collection of characteristics like grandiosity, inflated sense of self, low empathy, and the willingness to use other for their own self-interests. Known to have a spectrum of intensity with low intensity being potentially helpful, but high levels often being destructive (O'Reilly & Hall, 2021).

**Narcissistic leadership:** A style of leadership characterized by the leader's grandiose sense of self-importance, entitlement, and lack of empathy (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006).

**Productive narcissism:** A subclinical form of narcissism, characterized by innovative thinking, independence, and visioning of the future (Maccoby, 2003).

**Q Methodology:** A research methodology in which participants are asked to sort a number of statements (*Q sample*) by their personal preference (*Q-Sort*) (McKeown & Thomas, 2013).

***Q Sample:*** A representative sample of statements taken from the concourse and presented to participants to sort (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

***Q-Sort:*** The sort of statements by a participant in a Q methodology study (McKeown & Thomas, 2013).

***Subclinical narcissism:*** A degree of narcissism that does not prevent a person from succeeding at a job, maintaining relationships with others, or taking care of themselves and therefore does not rise to the level of clinical disorder (Furnham et al., 2013).

***Servant leadership:*** A style of leadership that is distinguished by its focus on service to others, and in which leaders are caring, humble, and empathetic in order to develop relationships that will benefit their organizations (Greenleaf, 1970).

***Statements:*** Q-Sort items that participants will examine and sort based on their perception (McKeown & Thomas, 2013).

***Upper echelon leadership:*** Executives use their experiences, values, and personalities to interpret situations and make decisions for their organizations (Hambrick, 2007).

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to explore, in the context of the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic, what leadership characteristics leaders perceive to be effective in leading their organizations through times of chaotic change. Leadership theory has bifurcated leadership into “good” and “bad,” and after extensive research, teaching, and development, results have varied (Kellerman, 2018). In times of chaotic change, the impact of leadership becomes even more pressing (Bennis, 2007) as organizations are expected to provide stability even in the face of uncertainty. To better understand the gap between what is considered “good leadership,” and what is considered “bad leadership,” I investigated the subject of dark leadership and bright leadership, which allowed me to answer the research question: What are leaders’ perception of effective leadership characteristics in times of chaotic change?

From the case put forward in Chapter 1, this chapter presents methods used to search for literature and how literature was selected to better understand the importance of chaotic change leadership characteristics. A literature review was performed in 2021 using ABI/Inform Complete Plus, Business Source Complete, JSTOR for business topics, and Oxford Handbooks Online, PsycARTICLES, ProQuest, and Web of Science to search psychology topics, which overlap somewhat. Topics, keywords, and phrases included *leadership, bright leadership, new leadership, transformational leadership, charismatic leadership, servant leadership, servant leader characteristics, dark leadership, narcissism, clinical narcissism, narcissistic leadership, grandiose narcissism, vulnerable narcissism, narcissistic leadership characteristics, upper echelon CEO, chaotic change, leadership context, leadership effectiveness, and assessment*. Search

results were refined by peer reviewed publications and evaluated for topic fit. Literature that was relevant to the understanding of leadership characteristics in times of change was then included into the literature review, several being identified as seminal literature, either theoretically or empirically, to this study.

This review begins by looking at the current definitions and conceptions of leadership, upper echelons theory, and executive personality, then highlights the dual streams of leadership literature: bright and dark. The review explores the development and history of the concept of narcissism and defines narcissistic leadership and the characteristics of a narcissistic leader, as well as the development and history of servant leadership, definitions of servant leadership, and the characteristics of a servant leader. The chapter continues with a review of recent studies and the gaps associated with researching narcissistic and servant leadership. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the relationship between narcissistic leadership, servant leadership, their teams, and the importance of context in understanding effectiveness.

## **Leadership Theory**

The discourse around leadership was built on the foundations of philosophers from the Western traditions like Aristotle and Plato, and from the Eastern tradition like Confucius and Sun Tsu (Kellerman, 2018). Over the last century, organizational behaviorists, psychologists, sociologists, and philosophers have participated in cobbling together theories of leadership emergence, behaviors, and outcomes. However, in the last 10 years, a troubling theme has emerged: that none of their work has contributed to a more cohesive or actionable understanding of leadership. In fact, Kellerman (2018) argued, leaders are getting worse:

...half of all leaders and managers are considered ‘a disappointment, incompetent, a mis-hire or a complete failure.’ The Corporate Research Forum (CRF) found that less than one-third of respondents rated ‘their overall ability to develop leaders as ‘good’ or ‘excellent.’ A 2016 article in the Harvard Business Review was titled ‘Why Leadership Development Isn’t Developing Leaders.’ Only 6 percent of respondents in a study by Deloitte rated their leadership pipeline as ‘very ready,’ while McKinsey found that in both the United Kingdom and the United States only a minority of senior managers thought ‘their companies develop global leaders effectively.’ And, in a book that aggressively takes on the Harvard Business School—the relevant chapter is titled ‘Can Leaders Be Manufactured?’—author Duff McDonald writes that while few business school faculty would “summon the courage to admit such a thing,” most so-called leadership learning ‘is bullshit.’ (p. 1)

Despite current leader underperformance and follower disengagement, few leadership researchers have ever measured the relationship between leadership characteristics and behavior. Higgs (2016) argued that

Rost and Osterloh are among the few to conduct an experimental study on the subject. Prompted by the financial market crisis, they argued that an important reason for the failures lie in the top management team’s lack of heterogeneity and lack of differentiated viewpoints. (p. 7-8)

Other quantitative methods include survey tools that measure leader use of behaviors (Buckels et al., 2014; Kaiser et al., 2015), historiometric methodology, which looks for personality patterns by examining “biographical materials of prominent people by employing quantitative assessment...” (Deluga, 2001), as well as qualitative methodologies like long-form interviews to construct meaning from experiences (Blase & Blase, 2002) and semi-structured interviews (Schilling, 2009). Hogan et al. (2004) argued that the only true purpose of research into leader personality traits is to tie it to effectiveness because “effectiveness is the standard by which leaders should be judged; focusing on typical behaviors and ignoring effectiveness is an overarching problem in leadership research” (p. 494). For this reason, many of the research studies involving leader personality use leader effectiveness as a dependent variable.

Indeed, it has been pointed out frequently that the main focus of leadership studies and research has related to ‘good’ or effective leadership (Kellerman, 2004; Aasland et al., 2008; Benson and Hogan, 2008). In this context it has been noted that few studies examine or explore leadership competences of flawed leadership ...” (Higgs, 2009)

The science of leadership has almost entirely ignored bad leadership, leaving no room for humanity in much of the recent leadership theories. Trait theories of leadership assessed the traits of successful leaders and believed that those characteristics were innate and couldn't be developed. If you were successful, you would always be successful, and if you were unsuccessful, you would always be unsuccessful. As it turns out, that was mostly systemic inequity.

The industry then shifted focus to behavioral theories of leadership, which broke leadership down into successful behaviors and unsuccessful behaviors and created task-oriented, people-oriented, and change-oriented leadership (Yukl, 2013), along with their productive behaviors. Then, contingency theories recognized the importance of context in leadership success and found that by measuring a “least preferred coworker” score (Fielder, 1967), we could better understand how resilient a leader could be to their context. They asked about “respondents’ feelings about a person with whom they can work least effectively,” (Bass, 2008, p. 522) using a scale of attributes deemed appropriate and inappropriate in the workspace, but which were ultimately found to be transitory over longer periods of time and could be induced by unpleasant experiences in lab experiments (Bass, 2013).

From there, the new leadership era (Bass, 2008) of charismatic leadership, transformational leadership, and servant leadership emphasized a community that strives to achieve a grand vision. New leadership, and the theories that followed, were very leader-centric (Kellerman, 2012). They placed the responsibility of success or failure of

organizational initiatives on the leaders, which opened an area of investigation called upper echelon leadership.

### **Upper Echelon Leadership**

In 1984, Donald Hambrick and Phyllis Mason discussed the characteristics of top managers in order to better understand their strategic choices and performance and whether the organizational “outcomes—both strategies and effectiveness—are viewed as reflections of the values and cognitive bases of powerful actors in the organization” (Hambrick & Mason, 1984, p. 193). Upper echelons theory posits that executives have tremendous influence over many pieces of their organizations, from strategic decision-making to interpersonal interactions. Therefore, if “we want to understand why organizations do the things they do, or why they perform the way they do, we must consider the biases and dispositions of their most powerful actors—their top executives” (Hambrick, 2007, p. 334).

Executive personality has a direct link to leadership style and, consequently, to organizational outcomes such as turnover, engagement, achievement of financial and strategic goals, and organizational perception because executives “act on the basis of their personalized interpretations of the strategic situations they face and... these personal construals are a function of the executives’ experiences, values, and personality” (p. 334). Through their experiences, values, and personality, executives make daily decisions (Bass, 2008) to create and communicate their compelling vision and organizational plans (Hambrick, 2007). Executive personality, then, becomes an important part of the understanding of not only executive behavior, but also organizational performance.

From this, literature asserts the link between Chief Executive Officer (CEO) personality and leadership style, and consequently, to organizational outcomes such as manager turnover, employee engagement, achievement of financial and strategic goals, and organizational perception. “By establishing a collective purpose, communicating a vision, managing culture, and creating adaptive capacities, CEOs influence their firm’s direction, relations with key stakeholders, and general reputation” (Resick et al., 2009, p. 1365). Because of the influence of top executives and leaders, researchers have become increasingly interested in the way that leader personality impacts behavior and organizational outcomes. Judge et al. (2009) asserted that,

On the surface, executives may look like a population that is segmented merely by job title and rank. However, they often possess specific personality traits that make them fundamentally different from those in subordinate positions. Organizational hierarchy systemically supports the elevation of these personality types. This promotion of those with certain personality traits is known as upper echelons theory (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). We can see support for this in research of executive personality using the Five Factor Model. For example, conscientious, extraverted, and emotionally stable (or high core self-evaluations) individuals may be more motivated to get ahead (Barrick et al., 2002), extraverted and agreeable individuals may be more likely to go along (Barrick et al., 2002), and, more speculatively, open, intelligent, and charismatic individuals may be more likely to provide meaning for their compatriots. Similarly, narcissistic, hubristic, dominant, and Machiavellian individuals may be more likely to get ahead and less likely to get along. (p. 863)

Most of the work of executive personality has been based in the leader trait paradigm. Although much maligned in recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in trait-based leadership research, due in part to the plethora of psychological assessments available for the study of personality traits. While original trait-based research focused on physical and/or socio-economic factors when evaluating leadership effectiveness, emerging trait theory focuses on the impact of psychological characteristics and traits as predictors of leader effectiveness. Judge et al. (2009) asserted that,

Whether one sees the yield from leader trait paradigm as meager, we believe that tests of the bright and dark sides of leader traits generally, and of the moderating and mediating links in the model specifically, stand the promise of showing that, in many theoretically appropriate situations, the link between leader traits and leadership emergence and effectiveness is quite significant. (p. 871)

From there, a flurry of literature around dark leadership began to emerge, with some conflicting results.

There are certainly people that strive more for achievement and are more likely to attain it, but personality alone does not explain their success. This is due to not only a lack of validity in many personality inventories (Judge, Piccolo, & Kosalka, 2009), but their failure to connect personality traits to leader effectiveness. Judge et al. wrote that

Kaiser, Hogan, and Craig (2008) criticized the Judge, Bono et al. (2002) and Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, (2002) study for this (failed) distinction, noting, that the study focuses on ‘how leaders are regarded and tells us little about leading effective teams;’ or how such traits ‘help organizations prosper’ (p. 102). Morgeson et al. (2007) also criticize the Judge, Bono et al. (2002) and Judge, Erez et al. (2002) meta-analysis on these grounds, arguing, ‘Perceived influence is not equivalent to effectiveness, and showing that there is a correlation of a personality dimension with perceived influence does not provide a strong basis for use of this measure to select managers who will be effective’ (p. 1044). ( p. 856)

Although theorists agreed that leadership was one important component of organizational success, for much of the 20th century, leadership researchers struggled to measure all the attributes that could accurately encompass the effectiveness of leaders in organizations, particularly in their contexts. Bass (2008) wrote,

A description emerged from a conference about what was expected of senior managers illustrates the importance of both person and situation: ‘Leaders should be uncommon (yet congenial, vulnerable, and accessible); capable as almost to promote awe.’ A leader should be a faultless reader of signals from the environment, a diagnostician capable of taking corrective action;...an architect who builds an enabling organization (Wilson, 1994). (p. 54-55)

The call for an awe-inspiring, faultless, strong, and vulnerable leader-ideal gave rise to the next evolution of leadership theory.

## ***“New” Leadership***

In the search for organizational theory that could be applied to the needs of new organizations, theorists turned to a new paradigm of leadership, termed “new” leadership (Bryman, 1992). New leadership introduced transformational leadership and its related leadership concepts like “charismatic, visionary, inspirational, values-oriented, and change-oriented leadership” (Bass, 2008, p. 619) as well as full range leadership and servant leadership. These leadership theories were built to encompass a larger concept of leadership, one that was not only effective, but also focused on the well-being and happiness of followers.

**Transformational Leadership.** Transformational leadership evolved out of transactional leadership. In a transactional leadership relationship, followers are motivated to complete tasks by rewards or punishments, limiting their behaviors, as well as their potential (Levinson, 1980). Researchers noted, however, that there were some leaders who used more inspirational characteristics, and that their followers achieved and exceeded their goals (Bass, 2008, p. 618). A transformational leader

raises the followers’ level of consciousness about the importance and value of designated outcomes and ways of reaching them; (2) gets the followers to transcend their own self-interests for the sake of the team, organization, or larger polity; and (3) raises followers’ level of need on Maslow’s (1954) hierarchy from lower-level concerns for safety and security to higher-level needs for achievement and self-actualization. (Bass, 2008, p. 619)

These leaders develop areas of mutual interest with followers and then use their charisma to engage and inspire success. Much of the more recent research around transformational leadership includes its relationship to transactional leadership because the two styles are not mutually exclusive (Avolio & Bass, 1999).

**Charismatic Leadership.** Charismatic leadership, based on Max Weber's (1927/1947) concept of charisma, requires a leader to "exert various effects and influences on their followers such as followers' trust in their leader's beliefs, unquestioning obedience and acceptance of the leader, identification with the leader, emotional involvement with the mission, elevated goals, self-efficacy, and collective efficacy" (Bass, 2008, p. 575). In the hands of a good and moral leader, these characteristics could create a highly productive organization. But many theorists identified a problem with the charismatic conception of leadership: not all leaders are moral.

Leaders deemed to be charismatic are encouraged to articulate a compelling vision to offer their followers intellectual stimulation. But all this leads to a common culture characterized by extreme degrees of conformity and a high concentration of power in the hands of a few leaders. Many of them feel liberated from constraints that apply to others and adopt leadership practices that advance their own interests at a terrible cost to their followers. (Tourish, 2013, p. 119)

The compelling vision and full surrender of followers to the ideals of the leader can create a dark side to charismatic leadership, found often in the practices of cults.

**Full-Range Leadership.** More recently, the transactional-transformational leadership model was adapted to include both styles in effective leadership, and to allow for differences in cultural preference (Bass, 2008). This new "New" leadership model was called Full Range. Avolio and Bass (1999) conducted a survey of 3,786 participants examining the full range leadership model and found that the best fitting models "contained six lower-order factors: charisma, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, contingent reward, active management by exception, and passive avoidance" (Bass, 2008, p. 624), allowing for both transformational and transactional characteristics in leadership. Although the model of full range leadership was tested

(Antonakis & House, 2002) and found valid, moderated by context, it was never fully embraced.

**Servant Leadership.** The term “servant leader” was coined by the much-lauded executive, academic, and consultant Robert K. Greenleaf, who introduced the term in his 1970 essay “The Servant as Leader,” to describe an important form of leadership that he believed could, contextually, be the key to greatness for leaders and their organizations (Greenleaf, 2008). Greenleaf was inspired by his experience, and the novel *Journey to the East*, to conceptualize the leader as one who puts the needs of their followers first, is invested in their growth and development, and a moral model for them.

Smooth, Montagno, and Kuzmenko (2004) compared transformational leadership with servant leadership. While transformational leaders share and align their followers’ interests, servant leaders put the interests of their followers before their own. Both emphasize personal development and empowerment of the followers. Both facilitate the achievement of followers... Transformational leadership may be more relevant in a dynamic environment; servant leadership may be more applicable in a stable environment. (Bass, 2008, p. 626).

This suggests that the servant leadership model may not be appropriate for all contexts.

Those who are inclined to lead as a servant are positively related to high motivation to serve or “a leader’s inclination or willingness to promote the interests of his or her subordinates” (Ng et al., 2008, p. 128), the leader ignoring the cost associated with leadership (Amah, 2018) and leadership self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Servant leadership is also positively related to desire to lead, loyalty, professional respect, contribution, and organizational citizenship behaviors directed towards individuals because this leadership style is based on the care and concern of others.

**Characteristics.** There are several characteristics associated with servant leadership. Although scholars’ identification of the key characteristics of servant

leadership varies, there are key constructs that have emerged from the literature review.

Table 1 illustrates the characteristics of servant leadership.

**Table 1**

*Characteristics of Servant Leadership*

Characteristics	Description	Scholars
Altruistic	A servant leader is expected to exhibit the characteristic of altruism, or the strong concern for another's well-being that spurs action involving sacrifice on the leader's part.	Patterson, 2003
Authentic	Servant leaders are expected to "be" servant leaders, rather than perform servant leadership.	Laub, 1999; Sendjaya et al., 2008; van Deirendonck, 2011; van Deirendonck & Nuijten, 2011
Caring	Servant leadership is based on caring behaviors that provide benefits to individual quality of life, as well as the organization's overall culture.	Page & Wong, 2000; Spears, 2010
Community Building	Servant leaders build community, which also includes having a prosocial identity, creating value for the community, enhancement of common good, and building teams.	Laub, 1999; Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Bass & Avolio, 2004; Liden et al., 2008; Liden et al., 2014; Page & Wong, 2000; Spears, 2010, Boone & Makhani, 2012
Conceptualization Skills	The ability to think abstractly, understand complex concepts, and develop strategic plans.	Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Liden et al., 2008; Spears, 2010
Credibility	Servant leaders are expected to display the characteristics that make it clear they are able to act in ways that uphold their strategy.	Farling et al., 1999; Bass, 2000; Russell & Stone, 2002
Develops People	Servant leaders have a commitment to their staffs' growth and success which includes working to develop them by being supportive, teaching and putting subordinates first.	Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Spears, 2010; Boone & Makhani, 2012; Laub, 1999; Liden et al., 2008; Liden et al., 2014; Page & Wong, 2000; Russell & Stone, 2002; van Deirendonck, 2011

Empowering	Servant leadership is about relating the qualities that allow organization members to display and act of their own power.	Page & Wong, 2000; Russell & Stone, 2002; Patterson, 2003, Liden et al., 2008; van Deirendonck, 2011; van Deirendonck & Nuijten, 2011
Ethical	Servant leaders have high integrity, are ethical, and honest.	Liden, et al., 2008; Page & Wong, 2000; Russell & Stone, 2002
Healing	Servant leaders engage in emotional healing.	Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Liden et al., 2008; Spears, 2010
Humility	A modest or low view of their own importance	Page & Wong, 2000; Patterson, 2003; van Deirendonck, 2011; van Deirendonck & Nuijten, 2011
Influence	Servant leaders use strong influence and persuasion.	Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Bass, 2000; Farling, Stone, & Winston, 1999; Russell & Stone, 2002; Sendjaya, Sarros, & Santos, 2008; Spears, 2010
Sharing Leadership	Servant leaders share leadership by standing back, sharing decision-making, delegation, giving power away) and voluntary subordination.	Boone & Makhani, 2012; Laub, 1999; Page & Wong, 2000; Russell & Stone, 2002; Sendjaya et al., 2008; van Deirendonck & Nuijten, 2011
Listening	Servant leadership uses listening as a way to build trust in their teams, as well as gathering information for future decision-making.	Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Spears, 2010; Boone & Makhani, 2012
Modeling	Servant leadership uses characteristics like modeling to encourage pro-social behaviors.	Page & Wong, 2000; Russell & Stone, 2002
Moral	Servant leaders are expected to lead with a moral component. They are called “moral charismatics” for their passion and moral maturity and are expected to tend to the moral development of followers.	Bass & Avolio, 2004; Liden et al., 2014; Sendjaya, Sarros, & Santos, 2008
Relational	Servant leaders express relational power through appreciation of others, interpersonal acceptance, and emotional intelligence which	Barbuto & Wheeler, 2002; Liden et al., 2014; Russell & Stone, 2002; Sendjaya et

	forms a covenantal relationship with others.	al., 2008; van Deirendonck, 2011
Service	Servant leaders use their resources and the resources of their organization to give greater power and meaning to the work done in the organization.	Farling et al., 1999; Bass, 2000; Page & Wong, 2000; Russell & Stone, 2002; Patterson, 2003 Bass & Avolio, 2004; Liden et al., 2008; Liden et al., 2014
Spiritual	Servant leadership includes characteristics that appeal to more spiritual ideas, including transcendental spirituality and agapao love.	Patterson, 2003; Sendjaya et al., 2008
Stewardship	Involves using leadership to effectively and ethically distribute resources to best manage the activities of the organization.	Russell & Stone, 2002; Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Spears, 2010; van Dierendonck, 2011; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011
Trust	Without relying on control, servant leadership uses trust to encourage performance and effective organizational behavior.	Farling et al., 1999; Bass, 2000; Russell & Stone, 2002; Patterson, 2003
Visioning	Servant leaders are expected to have the ability to create and articulate a clear vision for followers and to use their foresight for pioneering.	Farling et al., 1999; Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Spears, 2010; Bass, 2000; Page & Wong, 2000; Russell & Stone, 2002; Patterson, 2003; Boone & Makhani, 2012
Etc	Awareness , competence, forgiveness, communication, courage, accountability, low in narcissism, core self-evaluation, goal setting, visibility, autonomy.	Spears, 2010; Russell & Stone, 2002; van Dierendonck, 2011; Russell & Stone, 2002; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011; Liden et al., 2014; Page & Wong, 2000; Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006

**Outcomes.** The outcomes of servant leadership are often studied and well documented. Servant leaders are often less self-focused, with more emphasis on the stakeholders of the organization. “The steward may actually generate better returns on investment. Such a CEO may gain more support from the organization’s stakeholders and

enhance their motivation to excel” (Bass, 2008, p. 687). Their attention to those around them can create holistic development in followers, including growth in their skills, as well as their character development (Graham, 1991) and leaders who embody the servant leader role are accountable and invested in the broader growth of the organization. (Bass, 2008). This obligation to service can lead to both productive and unproductive outcomes.

***The Dark Side of Servant Leadership.*** In the discussion of “new” leadership, there was some awareness of the dark side to transformational, charismatic, and servant leaders. In *The Dark Side of Transformational Leadership* (2013), Dennis Tourish wrote about the common overreliance on leaders of all kinds for decision making, throughout all types of organizations.

These leaders present compelling visions and behave in ways to endear their followers to them.

In experiments with 357 students and 157 industrial personnel, Choi and Mai-Dalton (1998) found that self-sacrificing leaders were seen as more charismatic and legitimate, and generated intentions to reciprocate. Self-sacrificing leaders were also judged as more competent by the students. (Bass, 2008, p. 554)

These leaders are adept at decision-making and accomplishing their goals.

“Transformational leaders are usually personally assertive. They react to perceptions of what their followers need, but they also proactively influence what their followers want” (Bass, 2008, p. 554). They have brought organizations to high heights, while also hurting those around them, and bringing disastrous results in the end. “Crises are seen to lie behind the rise of charismatic leaders whose personal development and personality move them to succeed in taking charge (Bass, 2008, p. 554). Tourish (2013) contended that the tendency for everyone, including the leaders themselves, to attribute too much agency and too much credit to leaders, as well as the sometimes catastrophic consequences.

Leaders deemed charismatic are encouraged to articulate a compelling vision to offer their followers intellectual stimulation. But all this leads to a common culture characterized by extreme degrees of conformity and a high concentration of power in the hands of a few leaders. Many of them feel liberated from constraints that apply to others and adopt leadership practices that advance their own interests at a terrible cost to their followers. (p. 119)

The characteristics of dark transformational leaders look very similar to the dark characteristics of narcissistic leaders, so much so that Shamir and House (1994) combined the constructs and Bass (2008) considered them highly correlated because they were visionary, charismatic, and inspirational. So, what is the difference? Leaders are given power in order to create stability, but some leaders, especially leaders of powerful organizations, especially charismatic leaders of powerful organizations with absolute power over stakeholder decision-making, will always be motivated to use their power for their own ends.

When people (regardless of personality) wield power, their ability to lord it over others causes them to (1) become more focused on their own needs and wants; (2) become less focused on others' needs, wants and actions; and (3) act as if written and unwritten rules others are expected to follow don't apply to them. (Sutton, 2010, p. 28)

The dark sides of servant leadership, according to (Camm, 2019), start with the “fuzzy thinking” of leaders who lack “self awareness are naive about their own shortcomings, and unaware of where improvement is needed” (p. 108). These leaders, so focused on others that they do not look at their own needs, their own flaws, their own opportunities for development, and act in unintentional ways to commit harm. For instance, a “darker side of this fuzzy thinking is the leader who...is heavy on the paternalistic/benevolent father-figure vibe” (p. 108). This servant leadership is predicated on the leader being infallible with ultimate power. However, “leadership occurs in the context of a group or community,” (p. 110) and leaders and followers both have influence

over the effectiveness of the organization. A paternalistic leadership attitude can produce “child-like responses in the followers” (p. 111), which reinforce parental responses in leaders and so on.

Finally, servant leaders can simply use a “control-centric approach with a ‘veneer of niceness,’ using the vocabulary of servant-leadership in the framework of a rigid leadership style” (Humphries, 2010, p. 108) in order to plausibly appear to be a servant leader, while satisfying their ultimate need for control. “Often an emphasis on charisma, confidence, strong values and desire to influence are accompanied with the associated traits of dominance” (p. 112). The difficulty in understanding the bright and dark sides of servant leadership begins with a leader being self-aware and open to communicating. “A manager can present themselves as exercising servant power, and may actually believe what they are saying, but in actuality they are using a combination of coercion and manipulation” (p. 121). The danger of servant leadership is not in serving others, but in ignoring themselves. Not in developing others, but in ignoring their own development. Not in choosing to be a servant leader, but in ignoring the darkness in themselves.

### **Dark Leadership**

Dark leadership, known somewhat interchangeably as the Dark Triad/tetrad, and dark personality, is a subset of leadership that include the styles of subclinical narcissism, Machiavellianism, and corporate psychopathy, not to be confused with the “dark side” of leadership, referring to the unproductive side of popular leadership constructs (Conger, 1990). In their work *The Dark Triad of Personality; Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and Psychopathy*, Delroy Paulhus and Kevin Williams (2002) identified these three styles as “offensive yet non-pathological personalities in literature,” (p. 556) which were adapted

from the clinical definitions of personality disorders. These leadership styles share the characteristics of “a socially malevolent character with behavior tendencies toward self-promotion, emotional coldness, duplicity, and aggressiveness” (p. 557).

However, these styles are not strictly negative. O’Boyle, Forsyth, Banks, and McDaniel (2013) studied the intersection of impact of the Dark Triad on job performance and the prevalence of counterproductive workplace behaviors and found that Machiavellianism and psychopathy were slightly associated with lower workplace performance and higher incidences in counterproductive workplace behaviors, while narcissism did not impact job performance but had a large positive association with counterproductive workplace behaviors.

Many of the manifestations of the Dark Triad, while not necessarily positive, could contribute to organizational success. Although Machiavellians can be cynical and overly sensitive to criticism, their tendency to be skeptical of others’ true intentions can lead to careful consideration of business proposals and potential new hires. Narcissists may be unwilling to listen to criticism and have difficulty learning from experience, but their unusual self-confidence may lead to innovative risk-taking. Corporate psychopaths may have difficulty understanding how others feel, but they are also able to think rationally in order to make difficult decisions under pressure. Paulhus (2014) asserted that

It is important to remember that, while these personalities can sometimes be intimidating and upsetting, they are not dangerous. “Are dark personalities clinically disturbed? Across the board, the evidence fails to support that notion (Krupp, Sewall, Lalumiere, Sheriff, & Harris, 2013; Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Yes, they can be aggressive (Jones & Paulhus, 2010) and duplicitous (Jones, 2013). Unless one uses social malevolence as a criterion, however, Dark Tetrad traits should not be considered inherently psychopathological. (p. 423)

Because these styles have been considered aversive, these leadership styles have been understudied in organizations and within leadership scenarios.

### ***Narcissism***

Narcissism in personality has been derided for many years as problematic. Largely overlooked since its use in Freud's work on child development, it resurfaced in the 1960s as a way to describe the baby boomer generation, a group of selfish, self-involved navel-gazers who could not be bothered to think of others (Lasch, 1979). However, subsequent years of research have found more complexity in the construct.

Imagine a personality construct called 'construct X.' Construct X-ers are happier than most, less socially anxious, and less depressed. They feel less shame and guilt than non-X-ers. Construct X-ers have higher self-esteem (even if it is at times shaky), feel closer to their ideal selves, and think that they are smarter and better looking than others. Likewise, they are more energetic and socially extraverted than non-X-ers and spend much time seeking out new challenges and new sensations. They love to compete and win, and they love to be noticed for this. (Campbell, 2001, p. 214)

Understanding the complexity of narcissism is an important part of understanding how the construct intersects with leadership in organizations.

**Primary Narcissism.** Taken from the poetry of Ovid's *The Metamorphoses* is the parable of the man who fell in love with his own reflection and spent the rest of his short life staring into a pool of water. "Unwittingly, he wants himself; he praises, but his praise is for himself; he is the seeker and the sought, the longed-for and the one who longs; he is the arsonist—and is the scorched" (Ovid, 2013, p. 95). The story of Narcissus artfully describes the phenomena of one who longs for the self they can never be. From poetry to psychology, the concept of narcissism originated in 1899 with the work of psychiatrist Paul Nacker (1899) and physician Havelock Ellis (1898) in their studies of human sexuality. The psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud then expanded the concept of narcissism to

apply it to attitudes beyond sexuality. Though Freud was not the first to name the phenomena, he is largely credited with the invention of the word narcissism, which is now identified as primary narcissism. In his paper “On Narcissism,” Freud (1914) characterized narcissism as a person’s love of “what he himself is, what he himself was, what he himself would like to be, or someone who was once part of himself” (p. 27) as a protection mechanism against a threat to the ego, or a form of psychological self-preservation. This self-love, according to Freud, begins in childhood and progresses with the experience of trauma or deprivation. When confronted by the natural challenges of life, the childhood love of self, stemming from the narcissistic needs of their parents at what the child is, progresses to the self-love of what the child once was in order to bolster their confidence through adversity.

As the child grows, they begin to have experiences outside of themselves. Through the conflict between the idea of the self and the reality of who we actually are in contrast to others is born the ego ideal. “...when, as he grows up, he is disturbed by the admonitions of others and by the awakening of his own critical judgement, so that he can no longer retain that perfection, he seeks to recover it in the new form of an ego ideal. What he projects before him as his ideal is the substitute for the lost narcissism of his childhood in which he was his own ideal. (p. 32)

Freud’s (1914) assertion was that this is a natural psychological process.

Narcissism isn’t bad or wrong, but a natural step in becoming a whole person. Framed as a normal part of psychological development, Freud went on to describe the attributes of narcissists as “charming” and something that “compels our interest” because the narcissist seems so unconcerned by anything that would challenge their own self-image, they seem to have a “blissful state of mind,” unconcerned with the goings on of others and able to pursue their own enlightened creative ambitions.

**Clinical Narcissism.** The American Psychiatric Association (APA) officially designated narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) and included it in the DSM-III in 1987, as mental health professionals were using the term in practice without a comprehensive clinical definition (Gunderson et al., 1991). The addition of NPD to the manual of personality disorders was somewhat controversial due to a lack of empirical evidence around the definition of the construct of narcissism, the effective diagnosis of NPD, and comorbidity challenges (Gunderson et al., 1991), which

indicate that NPD as defined in DSM rarely occurs in patients who do not fulfill criteria for other Axis II disorders. Although DSM-III-R made significant progress in diminishing the very high levels of overlap with the other ‘dramatic cluster’ disorders, these disorders, and particularly histrionic and antisocial types, remain major differential diagnostic problems. (p. 175)

In subsequent iterations of the DSM, narcissistic personality disorder has been refined and, in its most recent version, the DSM-V (APA, 2013) defined NPD as a “pervasive pattern of grandiosity (in fantasy or behavior), need for admiration, and lack of empathy, beginning in early adulthood and present in a variety of contexts, as is indicated by five (or more)...” (p. 669) of the defining characteristics. These characteristics include grandiose self-importance, preoccupation with success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love, a belief in their own uniqueness, requiring excessive admiration, a sense of entitlement, interpersonal exploitation, lack of empathy, envy, and arrogance.

The challenge of comorbidity, or diagnosing narcissistic personality disorder distinctly, is addressed in the definition of NPD.

The relative stability of self-image as well as the lack of self-destructiveness, impulsivity, and abandonment concerns also help to distinguish narcissistic personality disorder from borderline personality disorder. Excessive pride in achievements, a relative lack of emotional display, and disdain for other’s sensitivities distinguish narcissistic personality disorder from histrionic

personality disorder...However, narcissistic personality disorder does not necessarily include characteristics of impulsivity, aggression, and deceit. (DSM, 2013)

Though distinct, NPD often occurs with other personality disorders, the traits of which may have exacerbated them (p. 672). Therefore, those diagnosed with narcissistic personality disorder are stable in their self-image, have excessive pride in their achievements, do not display emotions, and have disdain for the sensitivities of others, but are not necessarily self-destructive, impulsive, deceitful, or aggressive.

Based on this definition, APA estimates the prevalence of narcissistic personality disorder to be from 0% to 6.2% of the population and those diagnosed at 50% to 75% male (APA, 2013), with the distinction that, in order to be diagnosed with NPD, individuals must experience harm from the characteristics. Clinical evaluations of narcissism indicate that it can take at least two broad forms: grandiose and vulnerable. Grandiose narcissism reflects traits related to grandiosity and dominance where vulnerable narcissism is defined more by defensive responses that obscure feelings of inadequacy and negative affect (Dickinson & Pincus, 2003). Although there is general agreement about its overall nature, there is some controversy about how narcissism is most accurately assessed and whether it is a single dimension or characterized by multiple dimensions (O'Reilly et al., 2021). The DSM, for example, does not distinguish between grandiose narcissism and vulnerable narcissism. The distinction between grandiose and vulnerable clinical narcissism was prompted by the awareness that some individuals who exhibited the traits of narcissistic personality disorder seemed to benefit from them. Many highly successful individuals display personality traits that might be considered narcissistic. Only when these traits are inflexible, maladaptive, and persisting

and cause significant functional impairment or subjective distress do they constitute narcissistic personality disorder.

Narcissism, like other personality types, exists on a spectrum. The construct of narcissistic personality was developed in 1979 by Robert Raskin and Calvin Hall. Together they created the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) to measure the characteristics of narcissistic personality. Those who were suffering from narcissistic personality disorder would score reliably high on the NPI, while those who scored lower would be considered sub-clinical narcissists. (Raskin & Hall, 1979, p. 590)

It has long been understood that narcissism is not a binary state and that there are varying degrees of narcissism in all of us. High levels of narcissism are linked to disorder, clearly. However, low levels of narcissism are linked to lack of self-confidence, self-esteem, and worthiness. The subclinical forms of narcissism have been examined in several different models over the decades.

**Malignant and Healthy Narcissism.** The foundational construct of narcissism was one of Freud's many influential theories, but was left largely unexplored until, set with the backdrop of two world wars, the psychoanalytic community began to explore the nature of power, authority, and leadership. Two of Freud's acolytes, both born in Austria and transplanted to the United States during WWII, saw opportunities to renew interest in Freudian psychoanalysis in the United States and refresh his theories within the context of the Post-War American cultural shift.

Heinz Kohut was one of the first Freudian psychoanalysts to challenge, and ultimately break from, Freud's foundational ideas about narcissism. Kohut felt that Freud's understanding of narcissism was too rigid and simplistic (Lunbeck, 2014). Though Kohut was a supporter of Freudian psychoanalytical theory, he observed that the concept of narcissism was not as simple as ego libido versus object libido, love of self, or love of others. Instead, these two processes supported each other, that narcissism can be

immature or mature, just as object love can be immature or mature. Thinking that one is preferable to the other is wrong (Kohut, 1984).

Throughout his writings, Kohut has often found it useful to provide brief sketches of historical figures to illustrate some point. For example, in his now classic paper, 'Forms and Transformations of Narcissism' (1966), he cited Winston Churchill as an example of the interplay of the grandiose self, the ego, and the superego in determining personality. Churchill, as a child, had attempted to jump across a ravine to escape pursuing playmates. It was days before he regained consciousness and months before he began walking again. Nor was this episode an isolated event in Churchill's life. He seemed to possess an uncanny ability to extricate himself from apparently hopeless situations. Kohut suspects that for many of his early years, Churchill's grandiosity was not completely under control, though later, "when he reached the peak of his responsibilities the inner balance had shifted."<sup>3</sup> As a child, however, Churchill almost died at the hands of his impulsive grandiosity. According to Kohut, he jumped the ravine because, deep down, he thought he could fly. (Offer & Strozier, 1985, p. 72)

Kohut believed that instead of trying to replace self-love with object love, coevolution occurred (Lunbeck, 2012). Kohut named this complex and advanced idea healthy narcissism. Healthy narcissism was necessary, he argued, for psychologically balanced people to have vision, self-esteem, and even love. "The point for Kohut was to acknowledge what lay within, not to deny it in the name of an impossible-to-honor ascetic ideal" (Lunbeck, 2014, p. 47). Kohut went on to state that the practice of psychoanalysis should acknowledge both object love and narcissism in individuals, "without hidden moral and educational pressure" (Kohut, 1984, p. 210) if it hopes to remain relevant.

As with Kohut, rather than take the neutral Freudian view, Austrian-born psychoanalyst Otto Kernberg shaped the conversation around narcissism by exploring what he called the malignant narcissist. Where Kohut believed that narcissism could be healthy, nurturing, and positive self-love, Kernberg saw a highly destructive strain of narcissism.

Kohut's healthy narcissists were a satisfied, creative lot. Kernberg's malignant narcissists were unsatisfied and unsatisfiable, a contradictory mix of superficial but seductive sociability, glittery fascination, and high self-regard on the one hand and of restless emptiness, unempathetic ruthlessness, and fragile self-esteem on the other. (Lunbeck, 2014, p. 60)

The constant striving and struggle to achieve success and validation would propel them to positions of power and prestige, while still failing to satiate them, and leading to more frustration. The end result for the malignant narcissism would always be emptiness. "They are empty because, caught in binds of their own making, they are plagued by the immense needs but devalue as worthless whatever they receive from others to avoid feeling envious of what others had to give..." (p. 67). This abnormal, pathological, or malignant narcissism was the personality type that both fascinated and terrified the public.

Even as Kohut and Kernberg were refining and expanding the psychological construct of narcissism, "social critics" of the 1970s were using it to capture the American public's attention and exploit their fears. Thanks to a collection of cultural commentators lamenting the cultural change of American youth, the 1970s was dubbed the *Me Decade* (Lundbeck, 2012), indolent and slothful, whose only goal was self-examination. "Tom Wolfe skewered the newly emergent penchant for unceasing 'analysis of the self,' terming the impulse to do so narcissistic and linking it to the postwar prosperity that was endowing so many with the leisure to dwell on themselves" (Lundbeck, p. 13). At the vanguard of the movement to bring narcissism into the zeitgeist was Christopher Lasch.

Christopher Lasch was a professor of history who made a name for himself writing several books about the decline of American culture in the 1960s and 1970s. His most well-known work, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of*

*Diminishing Expectations*, excoriated a generation, which, in his view, had abandoned self-reliance to dependence, tradition in favor of narcissism. The primary argument of *The Culture of Narcissism* was that an American society, through drugs and self-help programs, had become self-indulgent, lazy, and useless to the advancement of our species. For Lasch, narcissists were diametrically opposed to the ideal “rugged individualist” upon which American mythology was based (Lasch, 1979).

He declared narcissism the cause of social decay and pronounced it an epidemic. Kernburg, who’s evidence-based model of the pathological narcissist Lasch had used to create his narrative “was cautious, arguing that the term ‘narcissist’ was both ‘abused and overused’ while allowing, from the vantage of 2001, that Lasch’s work had ‘contributed enormously’ to popularizing the concept” (Lunbeck, 2014, p. 69). Meanwhile, Kohut’s idea of the healthy narcissist was almost completely ignored. Lasch has used the concept of narcissism to create a cultural boogeyman that would sell his books, but he also facilitated a change in the popular definition of narcissism. After the cultural revolution of the 1970s, as Lasch was extolling his caricature of Kernburg’s malignant narcissism, the field of clinical psychiatry also saw an opportunity to observe the phenomenon.

**Productive and Unproductive Narcissism.** As with other dark personalities, the narcissist has great vision and the ability to inspire followers through her own self-confidence (Maccoby, 2004). “Indeed, one reason we look to productive narcissists in times of great transition is that they have the audacity to push through the massive transformations that society periodically undertakes.” (Maccoby, p. 2) They tend to undertake large challenges because they believe they cannot fail. When behaviors, such

as excessive risk taking or believing in personal infallibility, are successful, this success can even fuel their narcissistic self-image.

The positive aspects of these forms may be a secured sense of self-esteem to cope with daily frustration and stress, strive for constant improvement with high standards and effective, eloquent rhetoric and communication to followers (Lubit, 2002; Maccoby, 2003). The research around the positive aspects of lower levels of narcissism, such as “grandiose, competitive, attention seeking, and provocative, while demonstrating adaptive functioning” (Brunzel, 2021) indicated that a healthy level of narcissism may be beneficial for groups that are trying to achieve grand goals through “creativity, resilience, or even empathy with others” (p. 7), which leads to narcissistic leaders being perceived as highly effective. “Post (1986) argues that productive or constructive narcissistic leaders are a necessity, providing guidance to ‘ideal hungry’ followers especially during societal crises” (p. 7). These attributes can bolster the image of narcissistic leaders and give them the confidence required to take on larger challenges.

Kaiser et al.(2008) asserted that the characteristics of leaders that contribute to group performance are credibility, decisiveness, competence, and visionary thinking and are complementary to the characteristics needed for a leader in an environment of chaos: embracing change as a challenge, seeking new risks, sustaining and changing the identity and purpose of a group, developing people’s ability to solve tasks in new ways, using symbolism and storytelling, and being simultaneously in control and not in control (Karp & Helgo, 2009a), and the characteristics of a narcissistic leader—creating a vision to change the world, being a bold risk-taker, thinking and acting independently, and pursuing their vision with great passion and perseverance (Maccoby, 2003)—have

significant overlap at face value. By studying these characteristics, it may become clear that the attributes we value in leaders as good go hand-in-hand with attributes we consider bad. The most effective way to determine the validity of this premise was to study these characteristics with organizational leaders.

Many studies of narcissistic leadership and associated traits and behaviors have disproportionately focused on student populations in university settings or historical data. These populations may account for the assumption that narcissistic leadership, and other dark leadership types, always leads to counterproductive workplace behaviors and leader failure.

Some evolutionary psychologists have even suggested that extreme risk-taking behavior, decried in the media following the recent economic collapse, is often reinforced in organizational leaders in spite of potential dangers because it can be associated with success under benevolent circumstances or in the face of weak opposition (Johnson, Wrangham, & Rosen, 2002). (Spain et al., 2013, p. S47)

Several studies have shown that narcissistic leaders have risen to the top of their organizations and performed well. Still more leaders may be using narcissistic characteristics to further the goals of their organizations.

In general, dark personality dimensions were negatively associated with change in leadership and also moderated individual growth curves for leader development, such that individuals high in dark side traits developed more slowly. A notable exception was narcissism, which was positively associated with change in leadership, and did not substantially harm individual development. (Spain et al., 2014, p. S47)

Because of insufficient research of leaders in organizations, there is little empirical evidence of what narcissistic leadership characteristics are deemed valuable in achieving leadership goals.

## **Narcissistic Leadership**

Narcissistic leadership, as a theoretical construct, originated in 2006, when Rosenthal and Pittinsky (2006) published their work *Narcissistic Leadership*, defining it as leadership that is primarily motivated by the leader's own needs or beliefs that are perceived by the leader as being more important than the needs of followers or the organization as a whole.

We define egomaniacal needs and beliefs to include many of the patterns pervasive in narcissistic personality —grandiose sense of self-importance, preoccupation with fantasies of unlimited success and power, excessive need for admiration, entitlement, lack of empathy, envy, inferiority, and hypersensitivity (APA, 2000). (p. 629)

As Freud acknowledged, a certain degree of narcissism is common to a normal personality, but there can be drawbacks if narcissistic characteristics are strong. Drawbacks of narcissism include the desire to silence those who express dissenting opinions, poor listening skills, and sensitivity to criticism (Freud, 1914). Their egos tend to be rooted in deeply buried feeling of inadequacy (Williams, 2005), which, in their perception, makes those around them a threat to their inflated self-image.

While recognizing the strong potential of the narcissistic leader to do harm, some authors consider that, when confronted with certain contingencies, this kind of leadership can prove to be useful, and in some cases even beneficial, to the organization. For example, in periods of profound social crisis (war, national unity crisis, economic depression, etc.), narcissistic leaders, by virtue of their impetuosity and rhetorical talent, play an essential unity-building role (Post, 2004). Their firm stance in the face of adversity allows them to momentarily convince others of their ability to overcome it (Maccoby, 2004). Moreover, at the outset of a crisis, the narcissistic leader often takes on the role of instiller of hope, a role that is in many respects essential to the effective

mobilization of people facing adversity (Post, 2004). Unfortunately, the strictly situational qualities of narcissistic leaders tend to deflate quickly, ultimately rendering them incapable of effectively managing the crisis at hand (King, 2007). Through a review of the literature above, a more comprehensive collection of characteristics became evident.

***Characteristics***

In an effort to identify the characteristics of narcissistic leadership, I looked to the literature specifically identifying characteristics of those with higher levels of narcissism, who were also in positions of leadership. “As noted earlier, the field lacks consensus on what exactly constitutes narcissism in a leader (or in anyone else, for that matter)” (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006, p. 629). These seminal works include the characteristics from the *DSM-V*, as well as characteristics from earlier conceptions of subclinical narcissism. These 19 sources used a variety of methodologies to identify the characteristics of narcissistic leaders, some reviewed the literature, and some were meta-analyses of studies of narcissistic leadership, as Table 2 depicts.

**Table 2**

*Characteristics of Narcissistic Leadership*

Characteristics	Description	Scholars
Admiration-Seeking	Those higher in narcissism have an insatiable need for recognition, and admiration, which leads to attention-seeking from admiring individuals, and self-promotion.	Campbell et al., 2004; Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Higgs, 2009; O’Boyle et al., 2012; Ouimet, 2010; Resick et al, 2009; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006
Aggression	Those higher in narcissism tend to be aggressive.	Morf & Rhodewait, 2001; O’Boyle et al., 2012; Resick et al. 2009

Arrogance and Hubris	A tendency to show arrogant or haughty attitudes and behaviors.	DSM-V, 2013; Higgs, 2009; Padilla et al., 2007; Paulhus, 1998; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006
Attractive	The vanity of those higher in narcissism means that they tend to be more superficially charming, physically attractive, use more charming facial expressions, more self-assured body movements and are more well dressed than the average person. They tend to have good senses of humor and are entertaining.	Grijalva et al., 2015; Maccoby, 2003; Ouimet, 2010; Paulhus, 1998; Raskin & Hall, 1981
Charisma/Passion	Narcissistic leaders have the ability to influence and control the emotions of followers.	Maccoby, 2003; Ouimet, 2010
Dominant	Those who are higher in narcissism have a high need for power and dominance, which can lead them to be autocratic, derogating others, and demanding unquestioning obedience and belittling subordinates with anger and put-downs.	Campbell et al., 2004; Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Higgs, 2009; Maccoby, 2003; Morf & Rhodewait, 2001; O'Boyle et al., 2012; Ouimet, 2010; Padilla et al., 2007; Paulhus, 1998; Resick et al., 2009; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006
Entitlement	Those higher in narcissism believe that they are more deserving of better outcomes than others, often expect special gifts or assignments, and feel that they are not responsible for the reactions of those around them.	Campbell et al., 2004; Judge et al., 2009; Kets de Vries & Miller, 1985; Ouimet, 2010; Padilla et al., 2007; Raskin & Hall, 1981;
Exploitative	Leaders high in narcissism will often take advantage of the skills and abilities of others to meet their own goals.	Higgs, 2009; Kets de Vries & Miller, 1985; Raskin & Hall, 1981
Extraversion	Leaders who are higher in narcissism tend to be highly extroverted, creating a show of their skills, which makes them more likely to rise to positions of leadership.	Grijalva et al., 2015

Grandiosity	Narcissistic leadership displays a desire to succeed, achieve fame and adulation.	Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007; Higgs, 2009; Maccoby, 2003; Padilla et al., 2007; Resick, 2009
Hostility	Those higher in narcissism can be hostile, paranoid, isolated, cold, unforgiving, revenge-seeking and remorseless.	Judge et al., 2009; Maccoby, 2003; O'Boyle et al., 2012; Ouimet, 2010; Paulhus, 1998; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006
Independent	For those high in narcissism, independence includes autonomy and self-sufficiency, independent thinking, more agentic control and a focus on their own goals at the expense of those around them.	Campbell et al., 2004; Maccoby, 2003; Morf & Rhodewait, 2001; Raskin & Hall, 1981
Inflexible	Those high in narcissism are inflexible, refusing to compromise, sometimes refusing to listen to the views of others, ignoring reality, instead using their self-serving bias to make decisions.	Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Harms et al., 2011; Higgs, 2009; Judge et al., 2009; Maccoby, 2003; O'Boyle et al., 2012; Resick, 2009; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006
Interpersonally Manipulative	Those higher in narcissism are often skillful at initiating relationships, but are unable to maintain them over time due to their tendency to be interpersonally manipulative. They have low intimacy strivings, and can be callous, insensitive, and infidelitus.	Grijalva et al., 2015; Judge et al., 2009; Morf & Rhodewait, 2001; O'Boyle et al., 2012; Ouimet, 2010; Paulhus, 1998;
Lack of Empathy	Those higher in narcissism lack empathy, and are often insensitive to social constraints that undermine appropriate behavioral adjustments.	Higgs, 2009; Judge et al., 2009; Kets de Vries, 1985; Ouimet, 2010; Padilla et al., 2007; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006
Lack of Self-Awareness	Although those high in narcissism have an inflated self-concept, a positive, inflated agentic self-view, or even a grandiose self-view, it is often shallow. They often think they are more intelligent or more	Campbell et al., 2004; Higgs, 2009; Judge et al., 2009; Maccoby, 2003 O'Boyle et al., 2012; Resick et al., 2009

	attractive than they actually are, and lack self-knowledge and true self-awareness.	
Leadership	Individuals who are higher in narcissism have a tendency to emerge as leaders more frequently, display high levels of strategic dynamism and performance, although there is not linear relationship between narcissism and leader effectiveness.	Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007; Grijalva et al., 2015;
Positive Self-Regard/Self-Esteem	Those with higher narcissism are well known to be higher in self esteem, which includes confidence, self-admiration and self-love, with no room for personal improvement, constantly talking about themselves, in order to have their self-love affirmed by others . This self-esteem can sometimes be fragile.	Harms et al., 2011; Higgs, 2009; Judge et al., 2009; O'Boyle et al., 2012; Ouimet, 2010; Paulhus, 1998; Resick, 2009
Risk-Taking	Those higher in narcissism are often extremely competitive and perseverant, alert to threats with a high need for achievement. Coupled with a high approach motivation and low avoidance motivation, they are often highly impulsive, and prone to bold and often risky decisions likely based on their own high expectations, rather than reality.	Campbell et al., 2006; Harms et al., 2011; Higgs, 2009; Maccoby, 2003; Ouimet, 2010; Padilla et al., 2007
Self-Aggrandizing	Self-aggrandizing, the tendency to exaggerate achievements and boasting, the pursuit of self image goals, aimed at constructing, maintaining, and protecting a strictly positive image, which includes behaviors like claiming to have special knowledge, strategically attributing responsibility for success to themselves and bragging, self-enhancement and inflated self reports, exaggeration, including the exaggeration of achievements,	Campbell et al., 2004; Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Grijalva et al., 2009; Grijalva et al., 2015; Higgs, 2009; Judge et al., 2009; Maccoby, 2003; Morf & Rhodewait, 2001; O'Boyle et al., 2012; Ouimet, 2010; Paulhus, 1998; Resick et al., 2009

	overconfidence in their own abilities, attention to their own reputation, enhancing their own public image manipulating conversational patterns to their own accomplishments, and the attribution of humanizing traits to themselves but not others.	
Self-Centered	In addition to being high in self-esteem, they are highly self-centered, which includes excessive self admiration, self-absorption, and highly egocentric.	Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Judge et al., 2009; O'Boyle et al., 2012; Paulhus, 1998; Resick et al., 2009
Sensitivity to Criticism	Those higher in narcissism are hypersensitive and specifically to criticism, often responding with hostility, anger, or a "cool indifference or marked feeling of rage, inferiority, shame, humiliation, or emptiness in response to criticism, the indifference of others, or defeat" leading to a tendency to block criticism and an inability to learn from their mistakes.	Harms et al., 2011; Higgs, 2009; Kets de Vries & Miller, 1985; Maccoby, 2003; O'Boyle et al., 2012; Ouimet, 2010; Resick, 2009; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006
Superiority	A grandiose sense of self-importance or superiority, is frequent in those high in narcissism, as is elitism and a desire to associate with high status individuals in order to gain esteem.	Campbell et al., 2004; Judge et al., 2009; Raskin & Hall, 1981; Resick et al., 2009; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006
Uniqueness	Leaders high in narcissism tend to overexaggerate their skills, abilities, and uniqueness, emphasizing that they alone are able to achieve their goals.	Campbell et al., 2004; Judge et al., 2009; Kets deVries & Miller, 1985
Visionary	Those high in narcissism tend to have clear visions of their goals, including preoccupation with fantasies of power, success, fame, beauty, control, power, and success, forming grandiose ideas, grand visions, visioning to change the world and create meaning, and delusions of grandeur.	Kets de Vries & Miller, 1985; Maccoby, 2003; O'Boyle et al., 2012; Padilla et al., 2007; Resick et al., 2009

Resick et al. (2009) referenced studies that found a combination of bright-side and dark-side characteristics might be useful in executive leadership, depending on the context. Exploring different leadership characteristics, particularly those that include all aspects of the leader, as opposed to only those that are considered socially acceptable, does not replace earlier models, but could complement existing leadership theory. “Studies of the dark side may lead to a better understanding of leadership by complementing the traditional positive emphasis on the subject” (Kaiser et al., 2015, p. 57). By embracing a wider swath of the human condition, leadership models can become more useful to leaders in chaotic times.

There are challenges, however, to learning about how these characteristics are used in organizations. Researchers and organizations are understandably wary of looking too closely at their executives’ personalities. The prevailing view of negative personality traits follows a concept that Delroy Paulhus (2014) called the “devil effect,” which implies that a person who is bad in one way is likely to be bad in every way. In reality, dark personalities frequently have swift and strong impacts, potentially in all the right places, called “dark niches”(Paulhus, 2014). And their effects can be long lasting, as studies have shown that “bad is stronger than good” (Kaiser et al., 2015, p. 57). Conceptualizing leadership using a comprehensive set of leadership characteristics would create a more inclusive definition of leadership: one that includes all aspects of the leader, as opposed to only those that are considered positive. In order to better understand the most beneficial characteristics of effective leadership, more work must be done to comprehensively understand the characteristics being used by leaders in organization, particularly in turbulent environments such as times of chaotic change.

## Chaotic Change

For Kets de Vries (1980), charismatic leaders arise in crises out of a sense of their own grandiosity and the group's sense of helpless dependency. Whether they serve well as leaders depends on whether they can transform their 'paranoid potential' and sense of omnipotence into reality testing. (Bass, 1990, p. 42)

Chaotic change theory describes change that is both wide-spread and fast-paced and best describes the environment in which organizations are now operating (Karp & Helgø, 2009). "Change initiatives in organisations today operate in a complex external and internal environment on the edge of chaos because vital planning assumptions continuously change due to dynamic developments and events in organisations' external and internal environments" (Karp, 2006, p. 5). In the wake of financial crises and organizational corruption, political instability, global health emergencies, terrorist attacks, and the world-wide COVID-19 pandemic, organizations are finding it increasingly difficult to plan, execute, and achieve their goals (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2005; Karp & Helgø, 2008; Sheppard et al., 2013). A constantly uncertain and changing internal and external landscape no longer matches the stable environments that leadership theorists observed and documented two decades ago.

The concept of chaos has a specific meaning in the context of organizational change, meaning

changes in an organization, when external and internal complexity and uncertainty is too high to predict or control the future development by management of the organization...where issues and dilemmas caused by conflicting values and multiple opinions, and a variety of stakeholders are the norm. (Karp & Helgø, 2008, p. 86)

The impact of external and internal forces at the macro, meso, and micro levels create challenges for executives who are looking to create strategic goals and guide their organizations towards achieving them.

Under such conditions, the future is under perpetual construction, the past is continually reconstructed in relation to the present, and as leaders of change, we are not in control, we cannot determine what happens, and we cannot manage the organisation according to traditional ways. (Karp & Helgø, 2009b, p. 82)

Organizations and their leaders have only just begun to realize how volatile their environments are, and the depth and complexity of their relationship to it.

### ***Internal Change***

While chaos shapes the external factors impacting organizations, chaos also informs the change process within organizations. In order to withstand the demands of increasingly complex environments, organizations have become increasingly complex themselves, "... not merely complicated but dynamic, emergent self-organising systems which are difficult to predict and micro-manage by traditional management control and power mechanisms" (Karp, 2006, p. 5). In more stable environments, these complicated organizations were able to respond to changes that could affect them. In times of chaotic change when change is constant and unpredictable, however, their complexity can inhibit response. "Our organizations have been created to resist chaos, complexity, and uncertainty, a model which worked well when change was slower but which is now a liability" (Gwyer, 2010, p. 7). Organizations built to respond effectively to shifts in times of stable growth and change are not able to adapt to the phases of chaos that naturally occur in organizations experiencing change in chaotic environments. "These chaotic phases contain important elements of self-organization, self-governing, uncertainty, surfacing of new ideas, confusion related to making sense of a new context, frustration, disagreements, and diversity—all necessary for change" (Karp & Helgø, 2008, p. 91).

Internally, organizations focused on increasingly managerial solutions towards change but neglected to take into consideration the broad scope of human response to

complexity (Diefenbach, 2007). Realizing this limitation, organizational change theorists postulate that the key to understanding the impact of chaotic change on organizations is in looking at relationships. Leadership, at its core, is a relationship, and relationships formed in adversity are powerful, particularly in the case of a narcissistic CEO. The relationships that organization members have to their leadership becomes a powerful tool in allowing the organization to survive and thrive in times of chaotic change.

### ***External Change***

External factors, such as disease, technological security, and environmental disasters that impact organizational outcomes are increasing, due to economic globalization and technological interdependencies. The increase in multinational organizational partners means that local crises become global, impacting political decisions, supply chain management, and friends and families around the world. Global connectivity and the internet have given rise to instant communication and connection to economic, political, social, and religious development and upheaval around the world (Sheppard et al., 2013). This connection provides staggering opportunity but also amplifies differences and uncertainty.

Executives who are high in narcissism appear self-confident and powerful, making their personalities comforting in times of chaotic change (Maccoby, 2003). By understanding the characteristics of narcissistic CEOs, we can not only use them in times of chaotic change but can also provide better boundaries for them—while they might be incredibly influential in chaotic change (and useful), it would be helpful to know what boundaries are needed for them to stay effective.

**COVID-19.** The COVID-19 pandemic was an excellent example of chaotic change in organizations that created chaos for individuals and organizations in every country around the world.

The COVID-19 crisis emerged when China reported a new virus in late December 2019 (WHO, 2020a). In a matter of weeks, starting January 2020, nearly 200 countries got affected by the virus—most of them highly critically while a few in a limited way... The crisis churned out pictures of both failure to anticipate and floppy response management. (Pallikara, 2021, p. 3)

Leadership of organizations had to pivot swiftly to accommodate changes in government policy, logistical challenges in operating their organizations, and responding to the needs of followers and stakeholders, during constant change.

The 2020 COVID-19 novel coronavirus pandemic created a unique set of circumstances in which every organization, in every industry, around the world experienced simultaneous internal and external change and disruption. “Warren Bennis (2007), one of the most respected minds regarding business, management, and leadership, wrote that, among the threats to this world, two of the main threats to stability are leadership during increased globalization, and pandemics” (Shufutinsky et al., 2021, p. 137). Although we are still working to gain insight into the events of the 2020 pandemic, organizational researchers are using the event to better understand the complexity of organizations, their leadership, and how they operate in the world. Mary Uhl-Bien (2021), organizational scholar, wrote of the impact of COVID-19 on organizations:

The complexity of the past decades has forced business organizations to be lean and agile. As a result, when the pandemic hit, they were able to pivot and rapidly implement adaptive solutions to complex challenges: remote work in business, telehealth in medicine, online education in schools, and expanded takeout and ghost kitchens in the restaurant industry. (p. 1400)

Productive adaptations to COVID-19 have been noticed. But how did those productive adaptations appear? Uhl-Bien (2021) suggested that COVID-19 created an

opportunity to study the impact of leadership on organizational response to complexity, offering the chance to find answers as to why some organizations succeeded, while others fail to be resilient to change, and why leadership is so important during times of chaotic change.

### **Leadership in Chaotic Change**

Times of change often create fear responses in individuals, and in times of fear and chaos, people reach for stability (Maak et al., 2021). This creates a space for both productive leadership and unproductive leadership to flourish.

Indeed, as many have suggested (see, for example, Lipman-Blumen 2008), it may even be that difficulty and uncertainty heighten our tendency to hope for the appearance of a Messiah figure and in the process render us more susceptible to the persuasive charms of snake-oil salesmen, whatever the toxicity of the brew they are peddling. (Tourish, 2013, p. 5)

However, what makes leadership productive or unproductive in times of chaotic change may also change.

The COVID-19 crisis has certainly highlighted the intellectual qualities we should expect from leaders: systemic thinking and the ability to mirror environmental complexity; reflective and critical thinking, and the ability to update one's views when evidence changes; reasoning and ethical skills, and thus the ability to evaluate and judge one's decisions in the context of the greater good. (Maak, 2021, p. 16)

Current definitions of leadership are lacking in the context of even as the pace of change in the world increases change (Bennis, 2007). Traditional leadership theory focused on hierarchy, stability, and order, which is no longer the norm. Leadership theory must adapt to meet the needs of organizations facing chaotic change (Uhl-Bein et al., 2007).

Amidst this unstable and complex environment of increased non-linear circumstances of crises, a particular kind of advanced leadership is needed—a leadership style that can display increased awareness, flexibility, adaptability,

sense-making, and decision-making for comprehensively effective responses to whole system shock. (Shufutinsky et al., 2021, p. 137)

Even strategic leaders can struggle to adapt and be resilient to change. The new leadership requires courage to question the known present. This is more daring than investigating the unknown future. The new leadership is constantly challenging norms. Classical leadership can lead to a state of order, but it loses control in chaos and conflict. The new leadership thrives on leading in chaos and conflict. (Rubinstein & Firstenberg, 1999, p. 147). Both servant leadership and narcissistic leadership have constructive and unconstructive responses in times of chaotic change.

A number of studies on managerial incompetence found that 50% to 75% of managers were considered incompetent by their employees (DeVries, 1992; Hogan et. al, 1990; Millikin-Davies, 1992; Shipper & Wilson, 1991). The outcomes of that managerial incompetence in one aerospace company found that the

most common complaints from direct reports concerned (a) managers' unwillingness to exercise authority (e.g., "is reluctant to confront problems and conflict"; "is not as self-confident as others"), which characterized 20% of the sample of 84 managers, and (b) managers tyrannizing their subordinates (e.g., "manages his/her employees too closely, breathes down their necks"; "treats employees as if they were stupid"), which characterized 16% of the sample. (Hogan et al., 1994, p. 494)

A lack of authority was considered the most problematic in this organization.

### ***Servant Leadership in Chaotic Change***

Most lauded for their ability to lead in times of uncertainty are compassionate leaders, which exhibit behaviors like

reading emotional cues in oneself and others and anticipating their effects; empathizing with those who are suffering; listening to them with respect; acting to alleviate the suffering of others. During a crisis, the competent and disciplined performance of these behaviours are a crucial aspect of a leader's relational intelligence. (Maak et al., 2021, p. 6-7)

These are very similar to the characteristics of a servant leader, who is interested in the well-being of their followers, above and beyond their ability to accomplish their job.

Servant leaders have the tendency to create meaning, and therefore unity, in suffering, which can develop into an *esprit de corps* that can lead to transformation throughout the organization.

Unity in suffering creates a pathway for hope, and it is the task of a leader to be the conduit for positive transformation amidst deep crisis. Such transformation requires ethical intelligence, in particular an ability to take a critical perspective on values, norms, and interests in oneself and in others to recognize tensions and dilemmas, and a moral imagination that helps solve these tensions and dilemmas (Maak & Pless, 2006, p. 106). (Maak et al., 2021, p. 11)

In times of chaotic change, is it more important to exercise servant leadership?

### ***Narcissism in Chaotic Change***

Leadership in times of chaotic change is complicated by uncertainty. A chaotic change situation is one where there are complex and interdependent change variables, leading to a lack of understanding about the entire situation. This means that, to an extent, leadership has to act confidently in their chosen process. “Perhaps because the idea offends our somewhat puritanical notions of authenticity, we tend to forget that leadership often involves acting as if one were a leader” (Bennis, 2007, p. 4). The performance of leadership can be positively influenced by the perception of a leader as a leader, the act of confidence inspiring real confidence, for which leaders high in narcissism are known.

Leaders high in narcissism also use characteristics that may be considered productive in times of chaotic change. They are more likely to seek positions of power and authority in times of uncertainty and receive high ratings in executive performance and strategic dynamism (Grijalva et al., 2015). They are perceived by others to be

visionary (Maccoby, 2003; Padilla et al., 2007; Resick et al. 2009), independent (Campbell et al., 2004; Maccoby, 2003; Morf & Rhodewait, 2001; Raskin & Hall, 1981), are often attractive and charming (Grijalva et al., 2015; Ouimet, 2010), and highly risk-tolerant and alert to threats (Harms et al., 2011; Maccoby, 2003; Ouimet, 2010), which may be ideal for times of uncertainty and change, when rules and past precedents no longer apply and leaders have to swiftly implement creative new solutions to their organizational challenges. Opposing their constructive characteristics, leaders high in narcissism are also known to be inflexible (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006), resistant to criticism (Higgs, 2009; O'Boyle et al., 2013), and interpersonally manipulative in order to get their way (Ouimet, 2010; Paulhus, 1998), which could lead to silencing dissent and poor decision-making under stress. "More recently, studies have documented the corrosive effect of narcissistic leaders on collaboration and integrity in their social context (O'Reilly et al., 2020). It is for these reasons that narcissism is a dangerous fault line of leadership, particularly crisis leadership" (Maak et al., 2021, p. 4).

The duality of narcissistic leadership is evident in studies of narcissism in leadership, such as a studies like Chatterjee and Hambrick (2007), which

indicated that companies in the computer and software industry with more narcissistic CEOs were more strategically dynamic and grandiose, demonstrated more extreme performance (both good and bad), and exhibited more volatility in asset-related performance than did similar companies with less narcissistic CEOs. Likewise, a historiometric study of U.S. presidents (Deluga, 1997) suggested that some of the most and least successful presidents were highly narcissistic, whereas others of the most and least successful were not. (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006, p. 624)

Some researchers suggested that context is not the only form of complexity that plays a role in the effectiveness of narcissism in leadership, but that the needs of followers can also contribute to the productivity of narcissistic leadership.

Further pursuing this dynamic, Post (1986, 1993) argues that there are certain types of narcissistic leaders who, when matched with the appropriate followers in a particular historical context (i.e., during a societal crisis), are not only constructive, but a necessity. (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006, p. 622)

These leaders often use their ardent followers to facilitate large changes in organizations and society and are just as often consumed by that ardor.

While some people seem to have an innate charisma, we can observe that a narcissistic leader can become suddenly charismatic to followers who identify with the leader and decide he or she can do no wrong. The leader then feels omnipotent and projects total certainty. But this charisma lasts only so long as the leader is successful. With failure, leaders lose their charisma. (Maccoby, 2021, p. 450)

This opens the door to new leadership to carry the followers forward after the upheaval of a chaotic change event. The future of leadership research should include a broader definition of leadership, as well as the context in which leadership exists.

## **Chapter Summary**

This chapter elucidates the decades of construct development around narcissism in leadership, as well as servant leadership. The literature review indicated that both leadership styles are useful in certain circumstances.

Narcissism in leadership, while often maligned as dark and destructive, can have productive results for organizations who require forceful and innovative leadership that inspires followers with charisma and the personal vision of the leader. This kind of leadership also provides a certain amount of psychological safety for followers in times of chaotic change, by giving them the impression of a strong leader who will protect the organization from the challenges it faces in times of chaotic change.

Servant leadership, which has become popular in practice over the last several decades, is roundly praised for its efficacy in supporting and developing followers. This leadership style has proven effective in many well-established organizations with

traditional goals but may not serve leaders who face unfamiliar challenges or require more command and control during times of chaotic change.

Both constructs are well understood, but position in the literature to diametrically oppose one another, as Narcissistic Leadership is defined as lacking empathy while Servant Leadership is defined as not narcissistic. For the benefit of research and practical understanding, this dualism makes sense. In practice, a bifurcation of these styles becomes problematic, as leaders of organizations may fit less neatly into one construct or the other, and would likely use characteristics of both to achieve organizational outcomes. Forcing a choice negates the presence of light and dark characteristics within individual leaders and may create judgement around what could be natural and effective leadership characteristics that would benefit leaders, their teams, and their organizations as a whole.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

The purpose of this study was to explore how leaders perceive leadership characteristics in times of chaotic change, and how effective in leading their organizations through times of chaotic change those characteristics are perceived to be. Leadership theory has bifurcated leadership into “good” and “bad,” and after extensive research, teaching, and development, results have varied (Kellerman, 2014). Using Q methodology, this study aimed to establish a deeper understanding of the characteristics that leaders perceive to be most effective during times of uncontrolled internal and external change, also known as chaotic change (Karp & Helgo, 2008). The use of Q methodology in this study relied upon the perceptions of executives within organizations, along with the COVID-19 context, in order to determine executive leader perception of leader characteristics.

Leader’s perception of leadership is important because it reflects the leader’s lived experience in organizations; however, it can only be analyzed by the individual themselves, hence the importance of Q methodology in measuring perception. A Q-Sort methodology facilitates the “communication of a personal point of view” (McKeown & Thomas, 2013, p. 2), known as subjective communicability, using the research subjects’ personal frame of reference. This subjectivity is important because it impacts the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of individuals, although not considered concrete or fact, are important in understanding how attitudes are formed, what kind of affect is created, and which behaviors are chosen.

In times of chaotic change, the impact of leadership becomes even more pressing as organizations are expected to provide stability even in the face of uncertainty (Bennis, 2007). To better understand the perception of these leadership characteristics during

times of chaos, I used Q methodology to answer the question: What are leaders' perception of effective leadership characteristics in times of chaotic change?

In this chapter, I outline the relevance and proposed deployment of Q methodology. Additionally, I provide the research plan, participants, procedures, analysis and ethical considerations. This chapter concludes with my subjectivity within the study.

### **Overview of Q Methodology**

To understand how leaders perceive leadership characteristics, I employed Q methodology (Brown, 1993, McKeown & Thomas, 2013; Stephenson, 1935) to explore leader perception of leadership characteristics. Originally developed by William Stephenson in 1935, the purpose of Q methodology was to ostensibly measure subjective data, a revolutionary concept at the time, as it went largely ignored by researchers (McKeown & Thomas, 2013).

Q methodology, usually classified as a mixed methodology, uses "...a distinctive set of psychometric and operational principles that, combined with statistical applications of correlational and doctor-analytic techniques, provides researchers with a systematic and rigorously quantitative procedure for examining subjective components of human behavior" (McKeown Thomas, 2013, p. ix) in order to understand the perspectives of the individuals participating in the sort. A Q methodology participant is given a set of objects or statements, called Q set, and asked to rank them, based on their perception of those statements. "The statements are matters of opinion only (not fact), and the fact that the Q-Sorter is ranking the statements from [their] point of view is what brings subjectivity into the picture" (Brown, 1993, p. 94). Items are correlated to participants, rather than participants to items (Valenta & Wigger, 1997), in order to better understand how groups

of people perceive a topic, and how their perception could be applied to wider populations.

### **Research Orientation**

Through most of leadership theory history, leadership researchers have primarily taken an objective, positivist approach and framed the research using quantitative methodologies, measuring characteristics like age, tenure, and experience level to predict leadership effectiveness (Kaiser et al., 2008). My own research orientation, including my ontology, epistemology, and worldview, shaped the framework of this study, from the selection of my topic through the construction of my research practices.

Ontology refers to the nature of being and how beings view reality (Merriam, 2009). My ontological position aligns with relativism, in that there are many realities that we can experience, coming closer and closer to experiencing the perspectives of others, but there can never be one shared reality and, if an absolute reality exists, we cannot experience it. This ontology informs my epistemology, the philosophical perspective of knowledge, how it can be collected, and how it can be interpreted, which is considered essential to social sciences (Searle, 1991).

Interpretivists believe “...there are ways of knowing about the world other than direct observation; namely, our perceptions and interpretations of the world around us” (Al-Saadi, 2014, p. 2). Because of my relativist interpretivist perspective, I chose a research question that would naturally explore the perspectives that would enrich my understanding of leadership. In asking “What are leaders’ perception of effective leadership characteristics in times of chaotic change?” I seek to understand the perceptions of leaders, based on their experience of leadership. In order to accomplish

this exploration, I chose a methodology that would allow me to better understand perception; Q methodology.

### **Appropriateness for Using Q methodology**

Key concepts and processes of Q methodology include developing a concourse of communication, selecting a Q set from that concourse, facilitating a Q-Sort of the Q set with the P-sample, or set of study participants, and finally factor analysis and interpretation. The concourse of communication, or the collection of information pertaining to this topic, of this Q-Sort includes characteristics from both narcissistic leadership and servant leadership. Bass (2008) outlined Q methodology as a means by which subjective data can be measured using factor analysis of subjects rather than the statements. “When factor analysis is applied to the matrix of Q-Sorts, factor types with similar profiles usually emerge, instead of factors of measurements...” (p. 72) and this inversion of factor analysis is the key characteristic of Q methodology (Brown, 1993; McKeown & Thomas, 2013; Stephenson, 1935; Watts & Stenner, 2012), which addresses issues of subjectivity, context, and quantifying qualitative data at the same time.

### ***Research Procedures***

This Q methodology study was conducted in seven stages: (1) building a collection of leadership characteristics based on the research question, called a concourse; (2) identifying a representative selection of both the narcissistic and servant leadership characteristics from the concourse, called a Q sample; (3) selecting study participants, called a P sample; (4) designing a card sorting process, called Q-Sort, including pre-sort demographic questions, conditions of instruction; (5) facilitating this card sorting process with each participant; (6) analyzing the data; and (7) interpreting the results (Watts &

Stenner, 2012). This study also included one additional step: a post-sort individual interview designed to gather more information about their reasoning behind their sort, which participants were encouraged to opt into, if they chose.

### ***P-Set Selection***

One of the more interesting attributes of Q methodology is that it is not participants being studied to find patterns in their answers, but the statements are instead being studied to find patterns in the way participants perceive them. For this reason, selection of participants is important because the participants' perception becomes one of the variables (McKeown & Thomas, 2013, p. 70). Those who participate in the Q-Sort must "have a defined viewpoint to express and, even more importantly, participants whose viewpoint *matters* in relation to the subject at hand" (Watts & Stenner, 2012, p. 70-71). Looking at leaders who worked in organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic allows this study to frame the Q methodology through the lens of the leader's perception of the chaotic change event. Leaders must be high enough in the organization to make strategic decisions, while still having direct contact with teams inside the organization, C-suite executives for example.

Many studies use snowball sampling to find participants (Watts & Stenner, 2012, p. 70). Using snowball sampling through referral, I reached out to my networks within organizations to recruit participants for this study. Once several C-suite executives were recruited, I used the snowball sampling method to branch out into their networks and identify more participants. Participants were not required to have any specific experience except having led teams through a time of chaotic change of the COVID-19 pandemic. Q methodology requires the researcher to choose "research participants likely to reveal the

subjective dimensions one wishes to illuminate” (McKeown & Thomas, 2013, p. 33), which was, in this case, strategic decision-makers who were leading their organizations’ responses to the COVID 19 pandemic.

This study aimed to recruit 15 to 30 participants, based on examples of P sampling from Q methodology studies (McKeown & Thomas, p. 31), although the number of required participants in the Q methodology study is quite broad, and small P-sets, or even P-sets of a single participant are used in Q methodology (Brown, 1993; McKeown & Thomas, 2013). “Just as subjectivity is amenable to empirical analysis, so too can small P-sets sustain meaningful generalizations about the lawful nature of human behavior” (McKeown & Thomas, 2013, p. 31).

**Participant Recruitment.** Participants were recruited through snowball sampling and received emails explaining the process and giving them information on how to begin their participation as Appendix C describes. Although Q studies do not necessarily require large numbers of participants (McKeown & Thomas, 2013), it is still desirable to design the recruitment process in a strategic way (Watts & Stenner, 2012) so that participants are representative of as many viewpoints as possible. Because the population of C-suite executives is often quite closed, a networking approach to recruitment represented the best likelihood of recruiting a large enough and diverse enough (Watts & Stenner, 2012) group to adequately represent the perspectives of leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In my work as an executive coach and organizational development consultant, I have built a large network of executives and executive support professionals. Leveraging

this network, I encouraged meaningful participation from a population that can be hesitant to share information with researchers. There were 15 participants in total.

### **Inclusion Criteria**

- Participant is willing and able to give informed consent for participation in this study;
- Participant was in a C-Suite position during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Participant was in a C-Suite position for at least three years prior to the pandemic and at least three years after the COVID-19 pandemic started, Dec. 2019;
- Participant's organization must have a sufficient number of employees; and
- Participant was selected by a formal executive recruitment process.

**Exclusion Criteria.** I designed this study with the goal to explore the perception of executives in positions of leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was important, therefore, to include as many perspectives on this topic as possible. For this reason, there were few exclusion criteria beyond not meeting the inclusion criteria.

Participants who did not take on an executive role before the pandemic, participants who did not serve in their position for enough time during the pandemic were excluded.

**Demographics.** Of the 15 participants in this study, 10 identified as male, 5 identified as female. Most participants fell between the ages of 35 to 64 years old. Two had obtained a bachelor's degrees, eight had master's degrees, and four participants had obtained doctorates. And 12 participants had more than 20 years of leadership experience, while 10 identified as C-suite executives, while others were directors or vice

presidents. Participants work in the industries of healthcare, education, manufacturing, technology, and not-for-profit organizations. Three of these organizations had 11 to 50 employees, six had 51 to 200 employees, one has 201 to 500 employees, and five had more than 1000 employees.

### **Building A Concourse**

A concourse of communication, or concourse, is a collection of statements pertaining to a specific topic, or Q universe, the “universe of statements for any situation or context...” (Stephenson, 1935, p. 37), and it is from the concourse that statements are selected as a Q sample to be administered as a Q-Sort. Concourse of communication is the raw data from which the Q set can be developed. “Concourses thus arise from shared understandings, although the specific content may not be normative at all; meanings may differ even for a single person, depending on the particular context of subjective communicability” (McKeown & Thomas, 2013, p.18).

Creating a concourse then requires a researcher to amass material pertaining to the phenomena being examined. A concourse can be collected from a variety of sources (McKeown & Thomas, 2013), including research materials, verbal interactions, and internet message boards, but it is the lived experience of participants and the subjective communicability of those experiences that Q methodology is designed to interpret. Q concourse can include almost anything, from linguistic sources to pictures, aromas, music, and colors (McKeown & Thomas, 2013) but must be effectively narrowed in order to practically conduct a Q-Sort of the material.

In order to effectively target the Q concourse, concourse material may be extracted through a variety of methods, including in-person interviews, written narratives,

and indirect sources (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). “The level of discourse dictates the sophistication of the discourse” (Brown, 1993, p. 95). Indirect sources comprise the majority of Q-Sort discourses because they can be easily sourced on a variety of subjects and are natural “in the language of the parties to the discourse and ‘comprehensive’ in their representation of the subjective phenomena and viewpoints possible indicated” (McKeown & Thomas, 2013, p. 18). These sources consist of previously collected data like prior research, articles, books, or organizational data. Samples can also be adapted from alternative scales, like assessments or tests.

In the case of this study, the discourse of communication consists of characteristics drawn from literature about both narcissistic leadership and servant leadership characteristics. This discourse is based on the theoretical and literature framing described in Chapter 2. Articles for this study were searched for, by keyword, in applicable databases. Databases included Leadership Connect, ABI/Inform Complete Plus, JSTOR, Business Source Ultimate, PsycInfo, Annual Reviews, Sage Reference Books, Education Source Complete, and ERIC. I organized articles into folders by topic, then sub-topic (i.e. Leadership, New Leadership, Dark Leadership, Servant Leadership, Narcissistic Leadership), and finally by author and date.

Once the literature was organized, I evaluated each article based on construct fit, narcissistic leadership or servant leadership characteristics (including thoughts, attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes), using a structured sampling technique. “Structured samples, in contrast, are systematically composed and, given sufficiently comprehensive and theoretically elaborate experimental design, are less likely to incur the doubts of representativeness sometimes raised by unstructured samples” (McKeown & Thomas,

2013, p. 23). This study used leadership theory to frame structured sampling of narcissistic leadership and servant leadership characteristics. Articles that described the characteristics of servant leaders or narcissistic leaders were each organized into spreadsheets in order to create an organized collection of both narcissistic and servant characteristics by source (Appendix A), which served as the concourse that I used to select my Q sample.

### **Selecting a Q Sample**

Selecting a Q sample from a concourse is a nuanced part of Q methodology. From the concourse of communication, a researcher must decide which statements are appropriate to include in the Q sample. The Q sample should be limited to a number of statements that can be managed by participants, but that still represents the broader set of statements included in the full concourse (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Q samples can include any number of statements, and “provide a comprehensive and representative sample of the concourse” (McKeown & Thomas, 2023, p. 25). Q samples can be designed deductively through “a format that guides stimulus selection” (p. 25) or inductively, with representative samples “emerging serendipitously from the concourse” (p. 23).

While unstructured Q samples are useful in some Q studies, structured Q samples are “composed and, given a sufficiently comprehensive and theoretically elaborate experimental design... promote theory testing by structuring hypothetical considerations into the sample” (McKeown & Thomas, 2013, p. 23). From the research into narcissistic leadership and servant leadership characteristics, I identified characteristics from each of the pieces of literature I included in my literature review (see Appendix A).

From this concourse, characteristics were compiled into groups using a physical sort on the software Miro (see Appendix B). The characteristics were clustered by similarity and duplicate and similar characteristics were consolidated. In the case of narcissistic leadership, the clusters of characteristics fall closely in line with the attributes of the clinical definition of narcissism, with lesser severity, which aligns with the theories of narcissistic leadership as a subclinical orientation. Servant leadership characteristics were highly stable across the literature, with many similarities across the theoretical construct, which allowed similar clusters to emerge, and duplicate and similar characteristics were consolidated. Characteristics that only appeared in one source were removed. This yielded a comprehensive list of 24 narcissistic leadership characteristics and 22 servant leadership characteristics, respectively as Table 3 illustrates.

**Table 3**

*Q Set*

	Narcissistic Leadership Characteristics	Citation		Servant Leadership Characteristics	Citation
1	Admiration-Seeking	Campbell et al., 2004; Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Higgs, 2009; O’Boyle, Forsyth et al., 2012; Ouimet, 2010; Resick et al., 2009; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006	1	Altruistic	Patterson, 2003
2	Aggression	Morf & Rhodewait, 2001; O’Boyle et al., 2012; Resick et al., 2009	2	Authentic	Laub, 1999; Sendjaya et al., 2008; van Deirendonck, 2011; van Deirendonck & Nuijten, 2011

3	Arrogance & Hubris	Higgs, 2009; Padilla et al., 2007; Paulhus, 1998; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006	3	Caring	Page & Wong, 2000; Spears, 2010
4	Attractive	Grijalva et al., 2015; Maccoby, 2003; Ouimet, 2010; Paulhus, 1998; Raskin & Hall, 1981	4	Community Building	Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Bass & Avolio, 2004; Boone & Makhani, 2012; Laub, 1999; Liden et al., 2008; Liden et al., 2014; Page & Wong, 2000; Spears, 2010
5	Charisma & Passion	Maccoby, 2003; Ouimet, 2010	5	Conceptualization Skills	Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Liden et al., 2008; Spears, 2010
6	Dominant	Campbell et al., 2004; Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Higgs, 2009; Maccoby, 2003; Morf & Rhodewait, 2001; O'Boyle et al., 2012; Ouimet, 2010; Paulhus, 1998; Padilla et al., 2007; Resick et al., 2009; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006	6	Credibility	Bass, 2000; Farling et al., 1999; Russell & Stone, 2002
7	Entitlement	Campbell et al., 2004; Judge et al., 2009; Kets de Vries & Miller, 1985; Ouimet, 2010; Padilla et al., 2007; Raskin & Hall, 1981	7	Develops People	Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Boone & Makhani, 2012; Laub, 1999; Liden et al., 2008; Liden et al., 2014; Page & Wong, 2000; Russell &

			Stone, 2002; Spears, 2010; van Deirendonck, 2011
8	Exploitative	Higgs, 2009; Kets de Vries & Miller, 1985; Raskin & Hall, 1981	8 Empowering Liden et al., 2008; Page & Wong, 2000; Patterson, 2003; Russell & Stone, 2002; van Deirendonck, 2011; van Deirendonck & Nuijten, 2011
9	Extraversion	Grijalva et al., 2015	9 Ethical Liden, et al., 2008; Page & Wong, 2000; Russell & Stone, 2002
10	Grandiosity	Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007; Higgs, 2009; Maccoby, 2003; Padilla et al., 2007; Resick, 2009	10 Healing Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Liden et al., 2008; Spears, 2010
11	Hostility	Judge, Piccolo, & Kosalka, 2009; Maccoby, 2003; O'Boyle et al., 2012; Ouimet, 2010; Paulhus, 1998; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006;	11 Humility Page & Wong, 2000; Patterson, 2003; van Deirendonck, 2011; van Deirendonck & Nuijten, 2011
12	Independent	Campbell et al., 2004; Maccoby, 2003; Morf & Rhodewait, 2001; Raskin & Hall, 1981;	12 Influence Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Bass, 2000; Farling et al., 1999; Russell &

			Stone, 2002; Sendjaya et al., 2008; Spears, 2010
13 Inflexible	Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Harms et al., 2011; Higgs, 2009; Judge et al., 2009; Maccoby, 2003; O'Boyle et al., 2012; Resick, 2009; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006	13 Sharing Leadership	Boone & Makhani, 2012; Laub, 1999; Page & Wong, 2000; Russell & Stone, 2002; Sendjaya et al., 2008; van Deirendonck & Nuijten, 2011
14 Interpersonally Manipulative	Grijalva et al., 2015; Judge, Piccolo, & Kosalka, 2009; Morf & Rhodewait, 2001; O'Boyle et al., 2012; Ouimet, 2010; Paulhus, 1998	14 Listening	Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Boone & Makhani, 2012; Spears, 2010
15 Lack of Empathy	Higgs, 2009; Judge et al., 2009; Kets de Vries, 1985; Ouimet, 2010; Padilla et al., 2007; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006	15 Modeling	Page & Wong, 2000; Russell & Stone, 2002
16 Lack of Self-Awareness	Campbell et al., 2004; Higgs, 2009; Judge et al., 2009; Maccoby, 2003; O'Boyle et al., 2012; Resick et al., 2009	16 Moral	Bass & Avolio, 2004; Liden et al., 2014; Sendjaya et al., 2008
17 Positive Self-Regard/Self-Esteem	Harms et al., 2011; Higgs, 2009; Judge et al., 2009; O'Boyle et al., 2012; Ouimet, 2010; Paulhus, 1998; Resick, 2009;	17 Relational	Barbuto & Wheeler, 2002; Liden et al., 2014; Russell & Stone, 2002; Sendjaya et al., 2008; van

			Deirendonck, 2011
18 Risk-Taking	Campbell et al., 2006; Harms et al., Higgs, 2009; Ouimet, 2010; Maccoby, 2003; Padilla et al., 2007	18 Service	Bass, 2000; Bass & Avolio, 2004; Farling, Stone, & Winston, 1999; Liden et al., 2008; Liden et al., 2014; Page & Wong, 2000; Patterson, 2003; Russell & Stone, 2002
19 Self-Agrandizing	Paulhus, 1998; Morf & Rhodewait, 2001; Resick et al., 2009; Ouimet, 2010; Resick et al., 2009; Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Campbell et al., 2004; Grijalva et al., 2015; Maccoby, 2003; Resick et al., 2009; O'Boyle et al., 2012; Higgs, 2009; Judge, Piccolo, & Kosalka, 2009; Grijalva et al., 2009; Judge et al., 2009	19 Spiritual	Patterson, 2003; Sendjaya et al., 2008
20 Self-Centered	Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Higgs, 2009; Judge et al., 2009; O'Boyle et al., 2012; Paulhus, 1998; Resick et al., 2009	20 Stewardship	Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Russell & Stone, 2002; Spears, 2010; van Dierendonck, 2011; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011
21 Sensitivity to Criticism	Harms et al., 2011; Higgs, 2009; Kets de Vries & Miller, 1985; Maccoby, 2003; O'Boyle et al., 2012;	21 Trust	Bass, 2000; Farling, Stone, & Winston, 1999;

	Ouimet, 2010; Resick, 2009; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006		Patterson, 2003; Russell & Stone, 2002
22 Superiority	Resick et al., 2009; Raskin & Hall, 1981; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006; Judge et al., 2009; Resick et al., 2009; Campbell et al., 2004	22 Visioning	Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Bass, 2000; Boone & Makhani, 2012; Farling et al., 1999; Page & Wong, 2000; Patterson, 2003; Russell & Stone, 2002; Spears, 2010
23 Uniqueness	Campbell et al., 2004; Judge et al., 2009		
24 Visionary	Kets de Vries & Miller, 1985; Maccoby, 2003; O'Boyle et al., 2012; Padilla et al., 2007; Resick, et al., 2009		

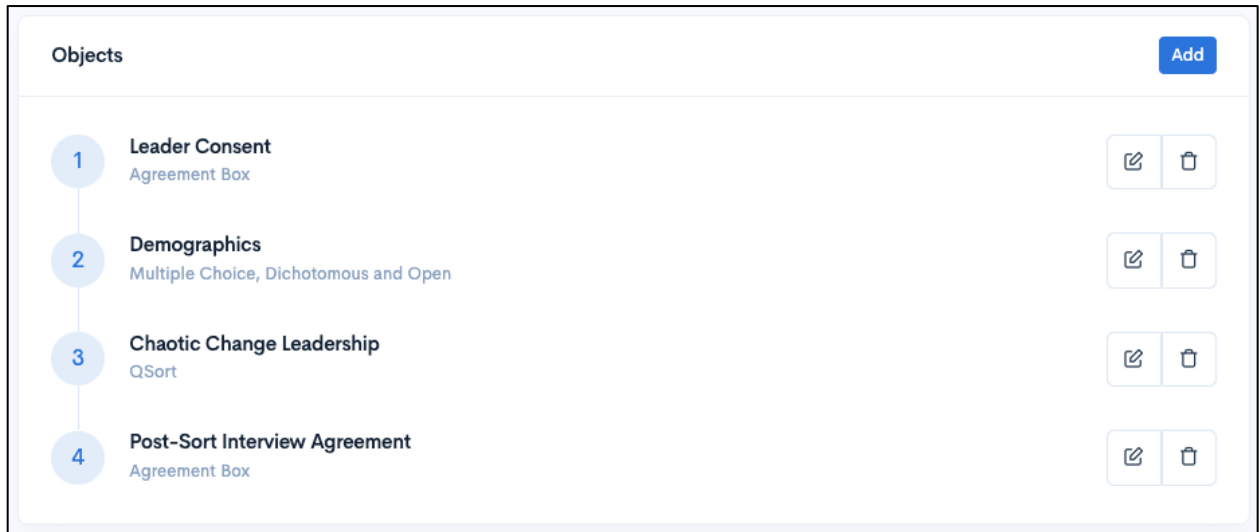
### Data Collection

The third stage of this study was data collection through Q-Sorting. The Q-Sort provides researchers with two primary data collection techniques during the sorting process, a card sorting process (Q-Sort), as well as a “post-sort interview” with participants after the card sort has been completed “for information helpful to the understanding and interpretation of results” (McKeown & Thomas, 2013, p. 29). This study included a general demographics questionnaire after to the sort, including age, gender, education level, years of experience, industry, current leadership role, number of direct reports, and organization size (see Appendix D). Figure 1 illustrates Q-Sort

software that participants click through from consent, demographics, Q-Sort activity, to the interview sign up page.

**Figure 1**

*Q-Sort touch tool software*



After sorting, participants completed exploratory post-sort questions, designed to gain insights into leaders' perception immediately following the sort. These questions ask why participants placed the statements in the categories that they chose. Participants also had the option to participate in a post-sort interview, which was scheduled at their convenience. There was literature that outlined the difficulty of collecting self-report data from executives (Cycyota & Harrison, 2006; Hambrick, 2007), so the primary concern of my data collection process design was that it would be easy to use and convenient for my study participants.

***Pilot Study***

Several people familiar with leadership and research were asked to participate in a pilot study of the Q methodology process, in order to ensure the process was smooth and reliable, and that leadership characteristics were comprehensive, but not overwhelming.

## ***Q-Sorting***

The Q-Sort was the final, unique grouping created by participants to express their perspectives on a topic. In Q-Sorting, the way in which participants order the statements of the Q sample is called a distribution, which is sorted onto a grid. This study used an unforced-choice distribution (Watts & Stenner, 2012, p. 77) to serve participants in ease of sorting into boxes, which created sort that did not resemble normal distributions. This choice was made to provide the most flexibility in the sort and allow participants to fully exercise their perception of the Q statements.

Statements were sorted into boxes that were labeled with a status by which participants could evaluate the statements. This study used seven sorting boxes with the statuses *completely ineffective (-3)*, *very ineffective (-2)*, *ineffective (-1)*, *neutral(0)*, *effective(1)*, *very effective(2)*, and *completely effective (3)*, and assigned weights, or scores, from -3 to 3. The number of boxes was significant to the volume of statements in this study (Rodrigues et al., 2023, p. 32). The score from each box was applied to the statements placed in that box, providing the data for assessment.

**Condition of Instruction.** Conditions of instruction are designed to serve as a guide and create a context, which allows participants to participate in the Q-Sorting. The conditions of instruction are the impetus for meaning ascribed to the sample items, and ultimately how participants choose to sort them. The conditions of instruction are designed to encourage a retrospective on COVID-19 and the characteristics that they found valuable.

In this study, participants sorted 44 randomized single-word statements into categories on a 7-point Likert scale (-3=Completely Ineffective, 3=Completely Effective,

0=Neutral) that represent the characteristics of narcissistic leadership and servant leadership. This data set included 15 participant Q-Sorts and nine interviews. The data was configured using Excel and uploaded into the KADE v1.3.1 (Banasick, 2019) desktop software to be analyzed. Upon entering the sort, they were instructed to: Please sort the following leadership characteristics, from most effective to least effective during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### ***Post-Sort Question***

After participants sorted the statements, they were asked to add more information through post-sorting questions. These several open-ended questions relating to the statements they described as Completely Effective, Completely Ineffective, and Neutral were designed to allow participants to reflect on their sort and share more about why they chose to sort these leadership characteristics in the way they did. Each box had a question attached. The purpose of post-sort questions was to better understand the perception of leaders. Post-sort questions were designed to further illuminate the perceptions of study participants. A full list of questions is available in Appendix G.

**Post-Sorting Interviews.** Post-sorting interviews can be used to expand on themes and add insights after the sort (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). For this study, the sort was administered through an online platform, Q-Sort Touch Tool, [www.qt3admin.com](http://www.qt3admin.com), which does not allow live interactions with participants. However, after they completed their sort and post-sort questions, participants had the opportunity to complete a post-sort form, agreeing to participate in an interview about the sort at a later date, within the next several months. At that time, participants took part in a 30-minute interview during which they were asked questions (see Appendix H) about their

experience leading in chaotic change, the characteristics that they would choose, and their perception of leadership in the future, and had the opportunity to ask any questions they have about the study.

### **Data Analysis**

Q methodology data analysis requires three components: 1) correlation of participants, 2) factor analysis, and 3) the computation of factor scores (McKeown & Thomas, 2013, p. 47).

### ***Correlation***

Q methodology uses factor analysis as a descriptive tool. In *R* methodologies, researchers are correlating the “relationship among [traits and participants] and factor analysis denotes the clusters of the *N* traits”, while Q methodology correlates and factors participants, not variables, and “comprises the statistical means by which respondents are grouped—or, more accurately, group themselves—through the process of Q sorting” (McKeown & Thomas, 2013, p. 47-51). In traditional qualitative factor analysis, items are correlated to themselves, or other items. In Q methodology, the items were correlated to the participant, allowing the analysis to factor the participant’s perception of the items. The aim of this study was to correlate respondents to leadership characteristics. I used KADE data analytics software.

### ***Correlation of Participants***

Q correlation reflects the relationship between each Q-Sort and every other Q-Sort being correlated (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Through the correlation matrix, similarities between participants’ perceptions were developed. These are “the site from which our factors will be born” (p. 98) and the process becomes “identical to those

followed in *R* method applications” (McKeown & Thomas, 2013, p. 51). This included a correlation matrix.

### ***Factor Analysis***

Factor analysis is the process by which I interpreted data past the correlation coefficients found in the correlation matrix. The basic purpose of factor analysis is to understand the relationships between all the Q-Sorts “through the identification of, and by reference to, any sizable portions of common or *shared* meaning that are present in the data” (Watts & Stenner, 2012, p. 98). In Q methodology, factor analysis can begin once results have been correlated into a matrix, and there is a high degree of flexibility for the researcher to select the appropriate measures and analysis.

As has been noted, it makes virtually no difference whether the coefficients in the correlation matrix are Pearson’s *r*, Spearman’s rho, or any other commonly employed nonparametric measure of association. Likewise, it makes little difference whether the specific factoring routine is the principal components, centroid, or any other method. (McKeown & Thomas, 2013, p. 52)

The method of factor analysis depends on the goals and processes of the study (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

### **Factor Extraction**

After the Q data correlations were calculated, I began factor extraction with the “elegant and mathematically precise factoring system” principal component analysis or PCA (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). Factor analysis was performed using the Q Methodology statistical analysis software KADE v1.3.1. First by extracting factors, or centroids, which share a portion of common variance (Watts & Stenner, 2013). Then the correlation coefficients of each factor were calculated and squared to “identify the proportion of common or shared ground through which these groups and their viewpoints

are connected” (Watts & Stenner, 2013, p. xx), or percentage of common variance. These scores show the degree to which the Q-Sort can be explained by these factors.

Next, I performed operations to calculate any residual correlations and “searching the residual correlation matrix, or Table of First Residuals, for any further portions of common variance present in the data. If it finds one, this will become *Factor 2*” (Watts & Stenner, 2013, p. 102). The process was repeated for each new factor found, and those factors were listed in a table, along with their eigenvalues and percentage of variance.

As long as the factors together account for 35% to 40% or more (Watts & Stenner, 2013), the number of factors accounts for enough total variance to be “considered a sound solution” (p. 105). Any factor with an eigenvalue of less than 1.00 was also excluded. “The resulting factors, together with the qualitative materials obtained from the interviews, are interpreted and described as viewpoints, attitudes, opinions, or beliefs about the topic of study” (Dieteren et al., 2023). Once an acceptable number of factors were extracted, they were weighted and placed into a factor array for interpretation.

### ***Qualitative and Quantitative Data Analysis***

In addition to collecting Q-Sorts, participants were also asked open-ended questions about their decisions to sort characteristics into the categories labeled *completely effective* and *completely ineffective*. The data from these post sort questions were cross tabulated, statistically analyzed using Qualtrics. Post-sort Zoom interviews of those who participated in the process were transcribed and coded for analysis. Finally, any strictly qualitative or quantitative data that aligned with factors extracted during the analysis of the Q-Sorts were added to the factor, providing additional context to the

factor. These numerical findings were presented from the statistical process of factor analysis, showing the decisions that were made after the Q-Sorts were entered into the KADE software, allowing for better insight into the research design and how to read and interpret KADE output. I documented the steps I took in selecting the number of interpretable factors and determining the statements that make these factors distinct.

### **Statistical Process of Factor Analysis**

Table 4 represents the Q set statements raw scores, as well as the mean and standard deviation of each sort. This is every individual participant's perception of each leadership characteristic included in the Q-Sort, the mean, which reflects each Q-Sort's average score within all the Q-Sorts, and the standard deviation, which reflects internal consistency and spread each participant's perspective. Mean and standard deviation are used somewhat differently in Q methodology in comparison to traditional statistical analysis, as they represent variability and consistency of individual Q-Sorts, not the entire data set.

**Table 4***Q-Sorts 1-15*

Participant ID Statement Number	1016	1017	1014	1021	1022	1024	1026	1027	1029	1032	1031	1028	1036	1033	1040
S1	-3	1	3	1	0	1	0	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	0
S2	3	3	3	0	2	2	3	3	3	2	1	3	3	3	3
S3	3	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	1	3	2	0	2	3	0
S4	1	1	2	2	3	1	1	2	2	3	0	1	1	2	3
S5	1	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	3	2	3
S6	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	1	3	3	3	3
S7	3	1	2	1	2	0	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	3	3
S8	0	1	3	1	1	1	3	1	3	1	-2	0	2	2	2
S9	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	-1	2	-3	0	1	-2
S10	3	3	3	1	2	1	3	2	3	0	3	2	2	2	3
S11	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
S12	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3	-2	-3	-3	-2	0	-3	-2	-3	-3
S13	-1	-1	-3	-1	-3	-3	-1	-2	0	-3	-2	-3	0	-3	-2
S14	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3	-2	-2	-3	-1	-3	-1	-3	-2	-3	-3
S15	2	3	3	1	0	1	2	3	2	-1	1	0	3	3	2
S16	-3	-1	-2	-2	-1	0	-3	-2	-1	-1	-1	-3	-1	-2	0
S17	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	1	3	0	1	2	1
S18	-3	-1	-2	-2	-3	-2	-3	-2	-1	-2	2	-2	0	-3	-1
S19	-3	-3	-3	-2	-3	-3	-3	-3	-2	-3	0	-3	-2	-3	-2
S20	2	3	3	1	1	1	3	2	0	-1	0	1	2	3	3

Participant ID Statement Number	1016	1017	1014	1021	1022	1024	1026	1027	1029	1032	1031	1028	1036	1033	1040
S21	2	1	2	1	1	0	1	2	2	-1	-2	1	2	3	3
S22	3	3	2	1	3	1	3	3	3	3	0	3	3	3	3
S23	0	2	3	0	1	1	2	1	0	0	-1	2	2	3	1
S24	0	0	0	1	0	-1	0	1	0	2	-2	0	0	0	-3
S25	-3	0	-2	-3	-2	-2	0	-3	-1	-3	-1	0	-2	-3	-3
S26	1	2	2	1	1	0	1	3	2	2	1	0	1	3	3
S27	-1	-1	-2	-1	-2	-3	-2	-3	0	-2	-1	-3	-2	-2	-3
S28	-2	2	-2	-1	2	-1	-2	-2	0	0	-1	-2	-1	-1	-1
S29	-1	3	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	-1	-3	-1	1	3	2
S30	-3	-1	-3	0	0	-2	-3	-2	0	-1	-2	-1	-2	-1	-3
S31	-2	-1	-2	0	-1	-2	-2	1	0	0	-2	-1	-1	-1	-2
S32	-3	-3	-3	0	-3	-2	-3	-3	-2	-3	0	-3	-1	-3	-2
S33	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3	-2	-3	0	-3	-3	-3	-3
S34	-3	-2	-3	-2	-3	-2	-3	-3	-2	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3
S35	1	0	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	-1	0	0	3	0
S36	-1	3	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
S37	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	2	0	-3
S38	-3	-3	-3	-3	-2	-1	-3	-2	-1	-3	0	-3	-1	-3	-2
S39	-3	-1	0	2	0	1	0	-1	0	0	1	-1	1	0	2
S40	3	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	1	3	1	3	3	3	3
S41	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	3	1	3	3
S42	3	2	3	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	-1	2	3	3	0
S43	3	1	1	2	0	2	3	2	1	2	0	1	3	1	3

Participant ID Statement Number	1016	1017	1014	1021	1022	1024	1026	1027	1029	1032	1031	1028	1036	1033	1040
S44	2	1	2	2	3	1	3	2	2	3	0	1	3	2	1
Mean	-0.045	0.636	0.477	0.205	0.159	0	0.295	0.341	0.614	0.136	0.091	-0.159	0.705	0.614	0.318
Std. Dev.	2.401	2.092	2.416	1.72	1.999	1.752	2.216	2.178	1.617	2.141	1.597	2.101	1.912	2.452	2.419

Table 5 shows the correlations between each of the sorts. The correlations show the amount of agreement between the sorts and can give a rough indication of how much participants agree or disagree on the topic.

**Table 5**

*Correlations between Q-Sorts 1-15*

Participant ID	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1016	<b>100</b>	79	82	76	81	76	89	87	78	75	37	82	83	84	74
1017	79	<b>100</b>	88	72	83	80	83	84	77	73	34	82	80	86	79
1014	82	88	<b>100</b>	79	83	88	90	91	81	78	42	86	88	95	83
1021	76	72	79	<b>100</b>	82	80	78	83	75	84	38	76	82	81	72
1022	81	83	83	82	<b>100</b>	84	81	85	83	88	36	84	78	88	76
1024	76	80	88	80	84	<b>100</b>	84	84	79	79	43	80	85	88	81
1026	89	83	90	78	81	84	<b>100</b>	87	80	76	39	84	88	86	87
1027	87	84	91	83	85	84	87	<b>100</b>	84	83	39	85	89	93	80
1029	78	77	81	75	83	79	80	84	<b>100</b>	74	34	77	77	84	76
1032	75	73	78	84	88	79	76	83	74	<b>100</b>	41	82	78	79	66
1031	37	34	42	38	36	43	39	39	34	41	<b>100</b>	38	42	33	40
1028	82	82	86	76	84	80	84	85	77	82	38	<b>100</b>	83	84	77
1036	83	80	88	82	78	85	88	89	77	78	42	83	<b>100</b>	85	80
1033	84	86	95	81	88	88	86	93	84	79	33	84	85	<b>100</b>	81
1040	74	79	83	72	76	81	77	80	76	66	40	77	80	81	<b>100</b>

### **Humphrey's Rule**

Humphrey's Rule "...states that a factor is significant if the cross-product of its two highest loadings (ignoring the sign) exceeds twice the standard error" (Brown, 1993, 223). The standard error (SE) of the correlation was used to determine the level at which a factor leading in this study was statistically significant, indicating that a sort was similar or different from other sorts and the relationship between them was caused by something other than random chance. The SE is calculated by dividing 1 by the square root of the number of statements in the Q sample. For this study, the  $SE=1/\sqrt{44}=0.1507$

## Principle Component Factor Extraction

PCA factoring resulted in eight distinct factors, displayed in Table 6, along with each factors' eigenvalue and percent of variance explained. Eigenvalues represent the amount of variance inherent in each factor, meaning that higher values represent a statistically significant viewpoint, which indicate stronger factors.

**Table 6**

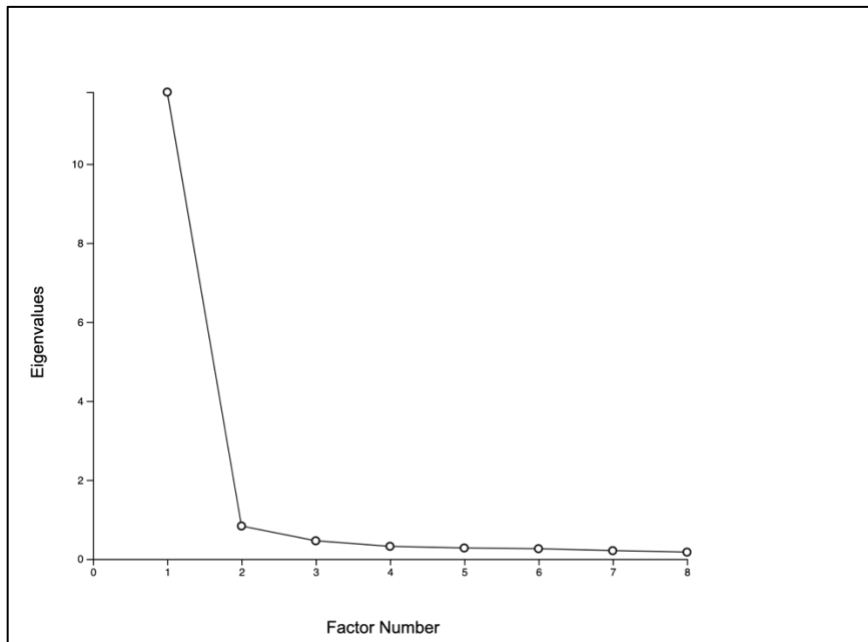
### *Unrotated Factor Matrix*

Nm	Participant	Fac 1	Fac 2	Fac 3	Fac 4	Fac 5	Fac 6	Fac 7	Fac 8
1	1016	0.8980	-0.0506	-0.0460	0.3195	-0.0914	0.1101	0.1076	0.1106
2	1017	0.8965	-0.0886	-0.1757	-0.0653	-0.1816	-0.1828	-0.0754	0.1930
3	1014	0.9510	-0.0116	-0.1503	-0.0109	0.0397	-0.0811	-0.1487	-0.0351
4	1021	0.8783	0.0074	0.3041	-0.0081	0.2538	0.0674	0.0416	0.1680
5	1022	0.9202	-0.0690	0.2043	-0.1398	-0.1796	-0.0223	0.0107	0.0518
6	1024	0.9177	0.0369	-0.0138	-0.1642	0.1440	-0.0395	-0.1616	-0.1213
7	1026	0.9280	-0.0397	-0.1141	0.2302	0.0177	0.0145	-0.0523	-0.0440
8	1027	0.9525	-0.0475	-0.0006	0.0626	0.0194	0.0664	-0.0301	0.0383
9	1029	0.8796	-0.0867	0.0005	-0.1246	-0.1756	0.3728	-0.0138	-0.1251
10	1032	0.8757	0.0394	0.4146	-0.0207	-0.0433	-0.1102	0.0325	-0.0486
11	1031	0.4516	0.8875	-0.0335	0.0070	-0.0685	0.0252	-0.0223	0.0244
12	1028	0.9118	-0.0354	0.0214	0.0746	-0.1241	-0.2113	0.1690	-0.1980
13	1036	0.9230	0.0211	-0.0739	0.1337	0.2258	-0.0095	0.0255	-0.0996
14	1033	0.9496	-0.1230	-0.0622	-0.0486	0.0135	0.0127	-0.1520	0.0565
15	1040	0.8647	0.0136	-0.2716	-0.2608	0.1129	0.0112	0.2914	0.0485
Eigenvalues		11.8205	0.8343	0.4597	0.3198	0.2777	0.2601	0.2100	0.1730
% exp. var.		79	6	3	2	2	2	1	1

Figure 2 presents a scree plot of the eigenvalues for each factor. Scree plots are used to determine the numbers of factors in a solution but visually representing the eigenvalues of potential factors. When the graph flattens, there are no more useful factors in the solution. In this case, the eigenvalues are less significant after Factor 3. For this study, I calculated 2-factor, 3-factor, 4-factor, and 8-factor solutions, and with guidance, settled on a 3-factor solution.

**Figure 2**

*Screen plot of eigenvalues*



### **Factor Rotations**

By looking at both the eigenvalues and variance, it became clear that there were, at most, three factors that could be extracted from this data. Eigenvalues are considered an indicator of factor retention when they are about 1.00. In this study, Factor 1 had an eigenvalue over 11, and accounts for 79% of the total variance explained. However, it is clear that this is not a 1-factor solution. Factor 2 had an eigenvalue near to 1.00, which indicate Factors 1 and 2 should be retained. Total percentage of explained variance is also an indication of which factors should be retained, and Factor 3 accounts for 3% of the total explained variance, giving a 3-factor solution an 88% pr the total variance explained. Therefore, I established a 3-factor solution and elected to keep these three factors for rotation.

### *Varimax Rotation*

A Varimax rotation was applied to “maximize the amount of study variance explained” (Watts & Stenner, 2005, p.126) and a judgmental rotation was not required.

### **Factor Flagging**

Table 7 represents the factor scores of each Q-Sort and the total explained variance of factor with the highest sorts flagged. The sorts that were selected for each factor were those that had the highest loading on that factor. Although some sorts may have applied to multiple factors, I made the decision to separate each factor cleanly. Flagged factor loadings are listed using bold font and orange highlighting.

**Table 7**

*Factor Matrix with Defining Sorts Flagged*

Nm	Q-Sort	F1	F2	F3
1	1016	0.7394	0.1515	0.4914
2	1017	0.8224	0.1221	0.3890
3	1014	0.8336	0.2075	0.4349
4	1021	0.5062	0.1823	0.7580
5	1022	0.6138	0.1233	0.7081
6	1024	0.7172	0.2391	0.5218
7	1026	0.8004	0.1729	0.4530
8	1027	0.7546	0.1637	0.5597
9	1029	0.7054	0.1095	0.5212
10	1032	0.4325	0.2062	0.8431
11	1031	0.1829	0.9656	0.1640
12	1028	0.7074	0.1653	0.5527
13	1036	0.7599	0.2286	0.4776
14	1033	0.8045	0.0934	0.5143
15	1040	0.8320	0.2204	0.2845
% Explained Var		49	9	29

Table 8 represents the correlations between each of the factors. Factor 1 is highly correlated with Factor 3, and represents a considerable amount of variance, which are the reasons that Factor 3 was ultimately included in the final factor solution. While Factor 2

is only just over 40% correlated with Factors 1 and 3, the percentage of total variance explained indicates that it is a significant perspective.

**Table 8**

*Factor Score Correlations*

	F1	F2	F3
Factor 1	1	0.4151	0.8874
Factor 2	0.4151	1	0.4106
Factor 3	0.8874	0.4106	1

Table 9 shows the number of defining variables, or number of Q-Sorts, included in each factor, the average reliability coefficient, which indicates how strongly Q-Sorts agree with factors, the composite reliability, which represents how significantly Q-Sorts align with the arrangement of the factor composites, and the standard error of factor Z scores. Z scores are used for cross-factor comparisons of Q items (Watts & Stenner, 2005). They are calculated using the total weighted score of the item, minus the mean of the total weighted scores for all items, then divided by the standard deviation the total weighted scores for all items. The Z score provides an indication of where each item lies on a composite Q-Sort for a specific factor. The standard error of the Z score indicates the precision and reliability of the Z scores in each factor. A smaller standard error indicates more confidence in the Z score’s ability to represent the statements’ association with factors.

**Table 9***Factor Arrays*

	F1	F2	F3
No. of Defining Variables	11	1	3
Avg. Rel. Coefficient	0.8	0.8	0.8
Composite Reliability	0.978	0.8	0.923
S.E. of Factor Z-scores	0.148	0.447	0.277

***Interpretation of Factor Scores***

The purpose of Q methodology is to explore the perspectives of the research participants. Interpretation of factor arrays, and the supplementary qualitative and quantitative data, is the process of “distilling the core meanings brought to light by the aforementioned technical means...” (McKeown & Thomas, 2012, p. 6), however, there is no standard practice for interpreting factor arrays (Watts & Stenner, 2013). A factor array is a composite Q-Sort, which represents the generalization of a subjective viewpoint (McKeown & Thomas, 2012). Factor arrays allow each item in the Q set to be tested against extracted factors. The process of interpretation is nuanced and requires the attention of the researcher to be on a holistic view of the subject being studied (Watts & Stenner, 2013). This holistic view towards data interpretation is a feature of Q methodology. In order to interpret data fully, the data must first be displayed fully in a factor array, then each factor considered from the viewpoint of the factor. Demographic, post-sort open-ended questions, and any interview data that is collected can then be introduced for full consideration. Ultimately, the responsibility of data interpretation lies with me, the researcher, and my feelings on how to capture the viewpoints of factors (Watts & Stenner, 2013).

## **Human Participant and Ethics Precautions**

This section summarizes the risks to human participants and the ethical precautions and actions I used to minimize any risk. Participating in this study involved no physical activity. Participating in the tasks required of this study would typically elicit no negative response. This study involved themes of leadership that could have elicited strong emotional responses. Because of this, those themes were not addressed directly to participants prior to the Q-Sort. Participants were welcome to discuss those themes, and others, after their sort, questions, and interviews. This study posed a low likelihood of threat to participants. Participants could withdraw from this study at any time and any data they submitted would not be included in this study. No participants withdrew.

## **Informed Consent**

This study was submitted to and approved by the George Washington University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Participants were given the informed consent form before participating in this study as Appendix D shows.

## **Participant Confidentiality**

Participation in this research was confidential. Participants were not asked to provide their names, locations, or organizations' names in order for them to participate in the Q-Sort. Follow-up interviews similarly did not include information that could reidentify individuals participating in this study and was also not be tied to participants' Q-Sort data.

## **Trustworthiness**

As with design, analysis, validity, and reliability, Q-methodology utilizes different criteria when understanding and addressing trustworthiness.

More and more investigators have become convinced of the relative utility of the naturalistic paradigm for studying that class of phenomena that is often called social/behavioral. Social/behavioral phenomena exist chiefly in the minds of people, and there are as many realities as persons. (Guba, 1981, p.77)

The purpose of Q-methodology is to measure the phenomena that exists in the minds of participants, which requires trustworthiness measurements that reflect this methodology.

### ***Internal Validity/Truth Value***

“How can one establish confidence in the ‘truth’ of the findings of a particular inquiry for the subjects (respondents) with which and the context in which the inquiry was carried out?” (Guba, 1981, p. 79). In designing a quantitative study, I looked to demonstrate correlation and similarities in the data. These similarities allowed the researcher to test hypotheses in a somewhat controlled environment for exact similarities or causality. However, since causality cannot be proven, the researcher had to rule out plausible alternatives. In the Q methodology, the same could be done with perception. Q-methodology recognizes that the “truth” of the phenomenon, which is the subject of inquiry, can only exist in the mind of the participant. This inherent subjectivity is the challenge Q-methodology was designed to address. “In Q methodology, the observer and the observed are identical; only the individual can measure his or her subjectivity. The methodology seeks to reveal these subjectivities without confounding them with operational measurements” (McKeown & Thomas, 2013, p. 4). Simply by allowing participants to create their own interpretations, meaning, and sort, Q methodology responds to the need for “truth” in these findings by simply allowing participants to fully express their truth.

### *External Validity/Generalizability/Applicability*

Although statistical validity is not the focus of this methodology, because the goal of Q methodology is to study the similarities between perception from person to person, rather than how many people have the same perception (Rodrigues et al., 2023, p. 33), there are still robust mechanisms in place to ensure results are applicable. “How can one determine the degree to which the findings of a particular inquiry may have applicability in other contexts or with other subjects (respondents)” (Guba, 1981, p. 79)? In rationalistic studies, external validity is used to show that results of a study could apply to other studies and, indeed, life generally. However, there is some question about the validity of external validity, as Cronbach argued that “all generalizations ‘decay’ like radioactive substances, having half-lives, ‘more history than science’” (Guba, 1981, p. 80). Like these radioactive substances, time diminishes their power.

When considering this study and Q methodology in general, it was clear that the results of this research would be applicable only to the person whose perception was measured, specifically in the context in which it was measured, and at the time it was measured.

Most Q-methodology studies are exploratory and qualitative in nature and tend not to use random sample designs. Generalizations rarely occur beyond the immediate set of participants and are typically not based on the numerical distribution of study participants among factors. The value of Q-methodology lies in uncovering opinion clusters. Once identified, their prevalence among the larger population can be subsequently tested using large group surveys and standard variance analytic methods. The purpose of a typology is not the creation of an exhaustive classification scheme but to find something in the material worthy of classification, and to provide some of the categories. (Valenta & Wigger, 1997, p. 504).

Still, as there may be similarities between participants, contexts, and perceptions, some transferability may exist in Q methodology findings between contexts, despite not being explicitly sought.

**Reliability/Consistency.** “How can one determine the findings of an inquiry would be consistently repeated if the inquiry were replicated with the same (or similar) context” (Guba, 1981, p. 80)? In order for Q methodology studies and findings to be useful, there must be a concern with consistency and the ability for the instrument being tested to produce consistent results. However, because Q methodology uses participants as instruments, and within a particular context, it is vital to understand that consistency within this methodology does not seek to exclude variance, but to follow it.

Due to its qualitative aspects, questions of research validity in Q-methodology are assessed differently than in quantitative research methods. The Q sorting operation is wholly subjective in the sense that it represents my point of view. There is no external criterion by which to appraise an individual’s perspective. Each individual’s rank-ordered set of statements is considered a valid expression of their opinion.

Content validity of the Q-sample is addressed by thorough literature review and by eliciting expert advice of those associated with the field under investigation. Face validity of the text and statement wording is addressed by leaving the statements in the participants’ words, edited only slightly for grammar and readability. Item validity, as understood in more traditional survey research, does not apply to the study of subjectivity. In Q-methodology, one expects the meaning of an item to be interpreted individually. The meaning of how each item was individually interpreted becomes apparent in the rank-ordering and in follow-up interviews. (Valenta & Wigger, 1997, p. 504)

“The naturalist thus interprets consistency as dependability, a concept that embraces elements both of the stability implied by the rationalistic term *reliable* and of the traceability required by explainable changes in instrumentation” (Guba, 1981, p.81). As participants are instruments in Q methodology, consistency between participants was not required.

### **Objectivity/Neutrality.**

An additional advantage of the method is that the critical data (in particular, the factor loadings and factor scores) are public; that is, they are a part and parcel of the research report. The researcher's conclusions can be affirmed or challenged by competing interpretations. In effect, nothing is hidden from view. (McKeown & Thomas, 2013, p. 15)

Another advantage concerns the a priori criterion used by the researcher to develop the measurement instrument, since, as he is responsible for choosing theories and/or variables, he selects the response scales that may allow him to validate his hypotheses (Lundberg, 2019)... Thus, it is not the researcher who prepares the Q-Sort who decides, a priori, the classifications, but the respondent, from his point of view (Stenner & Capdevila, 2020). (Rodrigues et al., 2023, p. 34)

### ***Delimiters***

This study used Q methodology, which resulted in several limitations. First, this was a study of leaders' perception of leadership, so the population was limited to leaders of organizations, specifically strategic decision-makers in the C-suite and two levels below. Leaders selected to participate were in their strategic decision-making positions prior to the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and were leading their organizations through the first two years of the pandemic. For the purpose of this study, I defined this period as March 2020 to March 2022.

The aim of this study was to explore the perception of leadership from leaders, not their followers.

If there is any one lesson we can take away from COVID-19 and the complexity of 2020, it is that we must do better in understanding that leadership and followership are a complex social phenomenon of leaders and followers relating together in ways that co-produce leadership and its outcomes...for better and for worse. (Uhl-Bien, 2021, p. 1403)

Involving a leader and their followers would provide a more meaningful picture of the relationships between leaders and their followers, as well as the potential for congruence (or lack thereof) between leaders' perception of efficacy and their followers' perception

of efficacy. However, that would be too broad of a scope for a dissertation, creating challenges for the data collection and analysis process. Therefore, this study only examined leaders. A formal executive recruitment process selected these participants through professional networks. Only leaders with contacts in those networks had the opportunity to participate.

Q methodology requires that participants share their perception of a limited number of statements, those statements being drawn from the literature on two styles of leadership. This means that results only include the characteristics included from the literature, not the entirety of characteristics the leaders would have been exposed to in their experience.

### **Limitations**

There were several limitations in this study that could create challenges to collecting and interpreting data. The first was the complexity of the Q-Sorting process. Participants needed to sort each of the 44 leadership characteristics twice, once in an initial sort between *effective* and *ineffective*, then participants sorted the characteristics again, this time between seven categories from *completely effective* to *completely ineffective*. The number of characteristics, number of categories in the second sorting, and the use of potentially unfamiliar software could create complexity in the sorting process, creating a potential limitation for data collection in the form of testing fatigue in participants.

Another potential limitation of this study was the quality of the discourse. Q methodology also requires that participants share their perception of a limited number of statements, those statements being drawn from literature about the topic. This means that

results only included the characteristics included from the literature, not the entirety of characteristics the leaders would have been exposed to in their experience. Q methodology is the study of perception, so the results of this methodology are limited to the subjective perception of these leaders, not objective facts necessarily. Concourses are developed based on the subjective choices of the researcher. Although a concourse may be developed using any number of representations, it is important that the statements chosen are representative of the perspectives that exist towards the subject. Any lack of representation in my selection of the statements was also a limitation.

### ***Mitigating Limitations***

In order to mitigate these limitations, my Q-Sorting processes were piloted by several participants who have Q-Sorting experience, leadership experience, or research experience. The goal of a pilot study was to not only test the representativeness of the concourse, but also the ease of sorting using the software available. Providing clear instructions before, and during the sort will also mitigate this limitation.

The goal of this study was to better understand the perception of those with leadership and executive experience. Q methodology is a methodology that is well-suited to better understanding the perspectives of those who lead organizations.

The Q sort methodology finds utility in studying social phenomena characterized by debate, conflict, and contestation ... measuring attitudes, behaviors, and personal characteristics assessed through self-report instruments .... Its objective is not to ascertain absolute truth but rather to collect and compare diverse opinions and perspectives..." (Rodrigues et al., 2023, p. 39)

The methodology, and this study, are not without limitations.

Q methodology is somewhat apart from strictly qualitative or quantitative methodologies, because it is both (Ramlo, 2016, p. 28) but predates all other mixed methodologies. Therefore, this methodology has specific limitations. One limitation of Q

methodology is that perception is subjective and therefore difficult to assess and people can change their minds over time. However, Q methodology is designed to determine a subject's perspective, at a particular time.

Factor A need not, and we think should not, be thought of as (nor reduced to) the expression of stable intra- psychic features of the factor exemplars (such as 'attitudes' or 'personality traits'). To think otherwise is to impose a priori the essentialist and somewhat counterintuitive assumption that a given participant is capable of expressing only one coherent viewpoint on an issue. All that we can say is that these participants did express these viewpoints via these item configurations. Whilst this leaves individual factor exemplars free to 'change their minds', we might nonetheless expect the emergent manifold of shared viewpoints to show a degree of consistency over time... (Watts & Stenner, 2005, p. 86)

Gathering the viewpoints of subjects in a particular class may provide insight into their particular views now, which can then be viewed across time.

### ***Participant Bias***

I recognize that using executives as a population was difficult, but I was also challenged with ensuring that the information gathered from this study was accurate. This study assumed that participants were participating in this process with productive intent, and that they were providing accurate responses. Although this would be a challenge for any researcher, Q methodology builds in a mechanism to ensure participation and the accurate spread of items. "With Q sort, participants are forced to distribute their answers across the various spaces of the table, which implies decision making and, as such, the effort to distort the answers is considerably less (Ramlo, 2021)" (Rodrigues et al., 2023, p. 34). Q methodology naturally encourages participants to consider each statement, and the context provided in the Conditions of Instruction, when choosing where to place the statement in their sort.

## **Subjectivity Statement**

In conducting this study, I recognize that my background influenced the research design and influenced the data collection and interpretation of results. As an organizational development consultant and executive coach, I have worked with leaders and teams in organizations around the world for the last 15 years. My work has given me the opportunity to see how leaders impact their teams, organizations, and culture as a whole. It has also given me clear insights into what leaders need to be successful, and what they are lacking.

My professional background has shaped my research. Throughout my literature and course development, my beliefs about and experience in personality, behavior, and leadership informed my work, reminding me of my goal to inform leadership models of the future through a clear representation of leadership in organizations.

In creating my course of communication, I used seminal literature from the fields of psychology, business, and organizational development. Once the literature was collected, I extracted leadership characteristics, then used an inductive process to cluster and group the leadership characteristics. As I grouped these characteristics, I was aware of my own biases for balance, representation, and comprehensiveness, as well as my desire to represent the experiences of leaders in the subclinical category of narcissism and the style of servant leadership. My role in developing my course and selecting a representative Q set involved my subject judgement, which has been influenced by my experiences. To limit the effects of bias, I revisited the characteristics I selected multiple times, ordering and rewording them for clarity. I also tested these characteristics with

peers to gain outside perspectives on my Q set selections, as well as the Q-Sorting process.

### **Chapter Summary**

The purpose of this study was to explore which leadership characteristics were considered valuable during the COVID-19 pandemic by experienced leaders. Using Q methodology, this study contributed to a deeper understanding of the characteristics that leaders perceive as valuable during times of uncontrolled internal and external change, also known as chaotic change (Karp & Helgo, 2008) in order to effect more productive leadership within organizations in the future. “Using Q methodology, to conclude, does not entail a denial of microlevel communicative pragmatics, nor of macrolevel social structures. Rather it entails a focus on subjectively expressed, socially organized semantic patterns...” (Watts & Stenner, 2005, p. 86) This study relied upon the perceptions of executives within organizations, along with the COVID-19 context, in order to determine executive leader perception of the efficacy of leadership characteristics.

This chapter provided a comprehensive overview of the research design of a study of the perception of executives towards leadership characteristics in times of chaotic change. The chapter reviewed the history of Q methodology, the steps of a Q methodology study, and the validity, reliability, research design, subjectivity statement, data collection, analysis, ethics and limitations of this study.

## **Chapter Four: Findings**

This chapter presents the results of a Q methodology study. The goal of this study was to answer the research question posed in Chapter 1 regarding the leader's perceptions of leadership characteristics during times of chaotic change. The data analyzed for this chapter came from three sources: the participants Q-Sorts, post-sort questionnaires, and post-sort interviews. In Chapter 3, the steps of Q methodology were discussed in detail and the research design for this study was presented. The purpose of this chapter is to present findings in relation to the research question.

### **Research Question: What are leaders' perception of effective leadership characteristics in times of chaotic change?**

The outcome of this analysis was a set of factors (perspectives) and differentiating statements (indicators) that were the central findings of this study. Qualitative data collected in the Q-Sort process from open-ended questions and optional one-on-one interviews with participants was added to the factor descriptions, using participants' own words to give richer understanding of these perspectives. The chapter ends with additional findings.

### **Summary of Quantitative Analysis Results**

In Chapter 3, I outlined a quantitative data analysis process that resulted in a 3-factor solution. My conclusion is that these three factors best represent the data in this study.

### **Emergent Perspectives of Leadership in Times of Chaotic Change**

Through statistical analysis, three distinct perspectives of leadership during chaotic change emerged. The first perspective is Factor 1, Traditional Leadership, is trust-based, ethical, and visionary leadership. Factor 2, Chaotic Leadership, emphasizes

emotional intelligence and charismatic leadership. Factor 3, Flexible Leadership, is focused on authentic connection, trust, and modeling. All of these perspectives highly value ethical behavior (ranking trust, listening and ethical +2 and +3), while rejecting self-serving, narcissistic leadership (scoring exploitative, self-centered, arrogant, grandiose, entitled, and hostile behaviors -3 and -2), which are consensus statements, agreed upon by a statistically significant number of participants.

### **Factor 1 “Traditional Leadership” Summary**

Factor 1, the traditional leadership perspective, was characterized by authentic, caring, and competent leadership characteristics. In the statistical analysis of Q-Sort data, Traditional leadership accounted for 79% of the variance in this data, indicating that this leadership style is considered effective in times of chaotic change in 79% of situations. In this study, the traditional leadership put the health of the team and organization first, visioning for potential challenges and opportunities for stakeholders. Leaders who engage in a traditional leadership style focus on credibility and empowerment, using their abilities to create a caring community of openness and mutual responsibility. Traditional leadership is not aggressive, exploitative, self-aggrandizing, hostile, self-centered, inflexible, or entitled. These leaders are also highly focused on the success of their missions, placing less emphasis on characteristics that would not provide directly productive outcomes.

Figure 3 is a composite Q-Sort of the perceived efficacy of traditional leadership characteristics during times of chaotic change, which visually represents the shared leadership preferences of C-suite executives during times of chaotic change, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The sort ranks various leadership characteristics on a scale from -3

(most undesirable) to +3 (most desirable), reflecting a consensus perspective among the participants. Items placed in 0 (neutral), while perceived as not ineffective, were considered less effective than items placed in +1, +2, or +3 categories.

**Figure 3**

*Composite Q-Sort of the perceived efficacy of traditional leadership characteristics during times of chaotic change*



### ***Factor 1 Composite Sort of Traditional Leadership***

Factor 1, Traditional Leadership, was the strongest and largest factor with 10 of 15 Q-Sorts loading on it, as well as more available interview data. Of the nine participants who also completed a follow-up interview, seven loaded onto Factor 1, indicating that they perceived Traditional Leadership to be highly effective during times of chaotic change. With consensus statements removed, the characteristics that these participants considered significant in their interviews were *authentic, ethical, humility, caring, and visioning*. Participants who perceived Traditional Leadership as highly effective specifically considered self-centeredness and admiration-seeking as highly ineffective in their interviews. Of the 15 participants in this study, 11 loaded onto Factor 1. These participants included 10 men and 5 women from a variety of industries, educational backgrounds, and positions. Interestingly, they all had more than 16 years of experience leading organizations.

**Authentic.** Participants who were asked about effective leadership during times of chaotic change identified authenticity as an important characteristic during the COVID-19 pandemic. They described authenticity as being in touch with their intuition and doing what was right, not just what they were told, as well as being able to flexibly use all their leadership capabilities, depending on the needs of the organization at the time. Some participants' quotes are below.

*“Well, so leading from what just feels true and right, and from a very centered place, right? And letting that guide choices and direction, I think was what differentiated the effective leader versus the one who just seemed to be following some arbitrary set of rules in the moment because you know those rules kept changing day by day it seemed like if not more than that even. So, if there was something more something bigger, I'll just say that that is guiding the decisions you make in a really difficult time, I think that can be felt and was helpful.”*  
(Participant 1026)

*“And I found myself, the more I went through it, just kind of thinking like I could be either of these, and it could be effective in any, in certain situations. So, I think that really stood out to me as being very important. And sometimes you need a healthy mix of all of it and just being able to decipher when you have to incorporate, you know, that aspect of your personality or that characteristic, uh, per the situation to get some effective results or to resonate with those that you are supporting, leading, et cetera.” (Participant 1029)*

**Ethical.** Leaders described circumstances where being ethical was important to their success in times of chaotic change, specifically identifying instances where it was their responsibility to refuse to engage in certain activities that crossed their ethical boundaries. A participant described what it means to be ethical in times of chaotic change.

*“I’ve assumed in most of the jobs that I’ve had, especially the senior ones, that the reason they put me in charge, that they figured out that I also knew when to, to be quite honest, disobey orders and tell the guy I’m not doing it.... There are times when you say, no, we’re not doing it. And then you have to have a reason, obviously. And then you have to be willing to, and most people are not, to be quite honest. You have to be willing to take that shot.” (Participant 1014)*

**Humility.** In times of chaotic change like COVID-19, leaders discussed the importance of humility, and how important it was for them to realize how little information or control they had. They believed that humility allowed them to listen and be flexible when circumstances changed as exemplified by the participants below.

*“This was not a time to be have your own agenda and push it forward and be rigid. It was a time to sort of be flexible and there was a lot that was outside of your control and you really couldn’t control things. And I think the more that you became rigid in your like mission or your goals or the things that you had to do, like, I think you would have come out the other side with like a whole team that hated you.” (Participant 1016)*

*“I really believe it was time to be selfless. It was a time to be, you know, when you talk about humility, it was time to say, I don’t know. So, I said a lot of, I don’t know, but we’re going to get through this together and we’re going to figure this out and our clients are going to figure it out. So, it’s almost like not providing, you know, you weren’t really providing all of this like positivity, like it’s going to*

*be great because that's a lie. So, you had to be authentic and you had to be real, but at the same time not delve into all the negativity of it all.” (Participant 1033)*

**Caring.** Participants identified care as an important characteristic in times of chaotic change because of the overwhelming emotional stress their colleagues were facing. Caring, for them, was a way to relieve some of that burden, even when the concerns were not directly related to the performance of the organization, as described by the participants below.

*“And so, I think even the lines for me between COO and like coach therapist got blurred very quickly. And really like how do you support the person? So yes, we had to get work done and we had to move our mission forward. And that didn't become as important as making sure like our people were okay.” (Participant 1016)*

*“So, a leader at that time has to be able to present, have good presence in front of their team, show that they're really committed to that team, show that they care about them. You know, they're worried about them and the business, keeping the business going. So, it's that balance of, again, humility, being authentic, being real. And then at the same time, listening, to know what are the issues that need to be addressed.” (Participant 1033)*

**Visioning.** The characteristic of visioning was identified as significant because of the uncertainty in the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants recognized that they needed to make choices about how to respond to challenges that could potentially occur in the future, but that they did not know exactly what those challenges would be. Using their skills, they had to make strategic decisions, well in advance, in order to maintain the productivity of their teams. The participants describe how visioning is needed.

*“But we had put in about four years of really, really kind of stringent leadership development protocols through my talent organizational development team to ensure that our team was ready. And as I look back, and I actually shared this with our team about a year into COVID and said, if we hadn't spent all of that time on kind of working on each other, working on this team, I'm not sure that we would be in the position that we are right now to be able to represent our members and do everything we need to do to not only help them to help the field ... but also to, for us to be able to kind of survive and thrive.” (Participant 1017)*

*“I said, people can rally around any mission if you give them something to rally around. So, we’re clear about why we want people to come work for us and why we want them to continue to stay working for us. And we do a lot to nurture that so that our people come in and are not just head down, do my job.” (Participant 1017)*

*“So, this is where you have to be visionary, you have to be visioning, you have to think about what’s the next thing we’re going to do, how are we going to handle this? Something that you didn’t know how to handle, right? So you didn’t have a heads up.” (1033)*

**Self-Centered.** Participants identified self-centered behavior as a highly ineffective characteristic in times of chaotic change. Those in positions of power who cared only about their own well-being, made decisions based on what was best for themselves alone, or weren’t committed to the mission of the organization were perceived as ineffective leaders. A time of chaotic change made those characteristics more apparent. Participants describe the impact of self-centered leadership below.

*“So that’s one of the things we look for in hiring people, especially our senior peoples, our senior folks. So, it is not about the individual. It’s about the greater good of the organization. It’s not how well you’re doing as an individual, you’re functioning, it’s how much you’re getting out of the team and how much the team is flourishing to further the mission of the organization. I’ll also say that our staff are very committed to the mission of the organization.” (Participant 1017)*

*“So, yeah, if somebody who is leading from a place of just worrying about themselves and how they look and what it’s gonna mean to them personally, that doesn’t work. I mean, you could just feel that. And so those kind of, those words, described, to me, someone who’s just reacting, responding based on what’s best for them, what they think is best for them personally. Ironically, it’s not actually, but from a ‘we’re not very centered’ place.” (Participant 1026)*

**Admiration-Seeking.** Similar to self-centeredness, admiration-seeking, or the need for praise from others, was also considered a highly ineffective leadership characteristic during times of chaotic change. Leaders who engaged in admiration-seeking behaviors were seen to be inauthentic and unaware of the other people working

hard around them. Participants describe their experiences with admiration-seeking leadership below.

*“So, yeah, I think that, and this is just my perspective, but I think that, you know, in the work that I do is never about us. I’ll say it’s rarely about us, right? There’s so many other layers above us that make our work important.” (Participant 1029)*

*“You know, the best leaders rose. The ones that are very self-centered didn’t get a lot of oxygen during that time period. I think those that had that those kind of, you know, self-centered, I want to be the center of attention. There wasn’t a lot of room for that because we were so concerned about bigger issues and bigger people.” (Participant 1033)*

### ***Traditional Leadership Distinguishing Statements***

In Q-Sort methodology, a distinguishing statement is a “statement that has been ranked in a statistically significant way to all the other factors” (Watts & Stenner, 2005, p. 217). These ranks can be positive, negative, or neutral, but the perception of these statements is the most different from the other factor composites. Table 10 depicts the Factor 1 distinguishing statements. In the perspective of traditional leadership, with a 95% confidence rate, visioning is perceived to be highly effective, developing people is perceived to be effective, extraversion is perceived to be ineffective, and risk-taking is perceived to be neutral.

**Table 10**

#### *Factor 1 Distinguishing Statements*

<b>Factor 1</b>			
<b>Threshold</b>	<b>Q-Sort Value</b>	<b>State. No.</b>	<b>Statement</b>
<b>P &lt; 0.05</b>	2	20	Visioning
<b>P &lt; 0.05</b>	1	21	Developing People
<b>P &lt; 0.05</b>	-1	24	Extraverted
<b>P &lt; 0.05</b>	0	29	Risk-Taking

<b>P &lt; 0.1</b>	0	23	Conceptualizing
<b>P &lt; 0.1</b>	0	37	Attractive
<b>P &lt; 0.1</b>	1	44	Stewardship
<b>P &lt; 0.15</b>	3	2	Ethical
<b>P &lt; 0.15</b>	3	10	Empowering
<b>P &lt; 0.15</b>	-1	39	Independent
<b>P &lt; 0.2</b>	0	4	Influence

### **Factor 2: Chaotic Leadership Summary**

Factor 2, the Chaotic Leadership perspective, is characterized by the authentic and caring, but also charismatic leadership characteristics. In the statistical analysis of Q-Sort data, Chaotic Leadership accounts for 6% of the variance in this data, indicating that this leadership style is considered effective in 6% of chaotic times of change. Chaotic Leadership puts the leader in control of the team’s health and well-being. Leaders who engage in a Chaotic Leadership style focus on creating a strong leader persona to attend to the immediate needs of the people around them. They focus on their own high self-esteem and vision to achieve organizational goals, and they are apathetic to self-aggrandizing, entitled, or hostile characteristics. Chaotic Leadership is not inflexible but also is not focused on developing people or taking risks. It does not lack empathy but is not focused on the health and well-being of the team, rather the perception of the leader. Figure 4 is a composite Q-sort of the perceived efficacy of Chaotic Leadership characteristics during times of chaotic change.

**Figure 4**

*Factor 2 Composite sort: Chaotic leadership*

-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
Inflexible	Healing	Relational	Influence	Visionary	Spiritual	Trust
Developing People	Community Building	Stewardship	Self-Aggrandizing	Charisma & Passion	Self-Centered	Empowering
Extraverted	Admiration-Seeking	Conceptualizing	Exploitative	Uniqueness	Caring	Positive Self-Regard/Self Esteem
Dominant	Sensitivity to Criticism	Arrogant	Visioning	Attractive	Ethical	Altruistic
Lacking Empathy	Grandiose	Lacking Self-Awareness	Credibility	Independent	Sharing Leadership	Humility
Risk-Taking	Service	Superior	Aggression	Authentic	Listening	Modeling
			Hostile			
			Entitled			

Factor 2, Chaotic Leadership, while it was the second strongest factor, because it explains 6% of variance, only 1 of the 15 Q-Sorts loaded onto this factor. This participant was male with a bachelor’s degree, more than 20 years of experience, and a C-suite

position in an organization of more than 1000 employees. Of the nine participants who engaged in follow-up interviews, this participant's Q-Sort loaded onto this factor. With consensus statements removed, the characteristics that this participant considered significant in their interview was *altruistic*, *modeling*, and *risk-taking*.

### ***Altruistic***

The importance of putting people before profits in times of chaotic change is represented as altruism. This leader believed that performance was not as important as people.

*“And I've got some companies I can think of where, yeah, their business results may have been there, but the human side of it and the sustainability of their business from the culture they're trying to build really took a hit during that time.” (Participant 1031)*

*“And really, you know, at the end of the day, the money didn't matter as much as the values. So, if we had to give up some revenue or some performance to make sure that we had masks or people, you know, were home with their family, if they need to be home with their family, it was pretty good to witness.” (Participant 1031)*

### ***Modeling***

This leader also believed that their attitude and ability made an impact on their team. During times of chaotic change, modeling the characteristics that the leader considers effective is considered highly effective. They said,

*“So first off, you know, you need, I need to lead by example. So, you know, having a positive outlook on the situation, despite all the challenges that I had conveyed as a reality, you know, coming to work with an upbeat attitude with a, you know, a sense of capability, you know, really leading with a positive outlook. a positive intent made a difference.” (Participant 1031)*

### ***Risk Taking***

During times of chaotic change, this leader did not believe that unjustifiable risks should be taken. They mentioned,

*“So, I think having a balanced risk position made sense during this time. And if you were going to take risks, they should be balanced risks, especially from a safety perspective. But I don't think it lent itself to, for me, it didn't lend itself to significant risk taking during that time.” (Participant 1031)*

***Chaos Leadership Distinguishing Statements***

Table 11 depicts the Factor 2 distinguishing statements. In the perspective of Chaotic Leadership, with a 99.9% confidence rate, positive self-regard/self-esteem is perceived to be entirely effective. At a 99.99% and 99.% confidence rate, respectively, self-centered and spiritual is considered very effective. Hostile, self-aggrandizing, exploitative, and entitled leadership is perceived to be neutral. Service and community building are perceived to be highly ineffective, and risk-taking is perceived to be completely ineffective.

**Table 11**

*Factor 2 Distinguishing Statements*

<b>Factor 2</b>			
Threshold	Q-Sort Value	State. No.	Statement
P < 0.0001	2	18	Self-Centered
P < 0.001	-2	8	Service
P < 0.005	2	9	Spiritual
P < 0.005	-3	29	Risk-Taking
P < 0.005	0	33	Hostile
P < 0.01	0	12	Self-Aggrandizing
P < 0.01	3	17	Positive Self-Regard/Self Esteem
P < 0.01	0	19	Exploitative
P < 0.01	0	38	Entitled
P < 0.01	-2	42	Community Building
P < 0.05	-3	21	Developing People
P < 0.05	0	22	Credibility

P < 0.05	-3	24	Extraverted
P < 0.05	0	32	Aggression
P < 0.1	-1	14	Arrogant
P < 0.1	-1	44	Stewardship
P < 0.15	2	6	Listening
P < 0.15	3	10	Empowering
P < 0.15	-1	43	Relational
P < 0.2	0	4	Influence
P < 0.2	-1	23	Conceptualizing
P < 0.2	-2	35	Healing

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### **Factor 3: Flexible Leadership Summary**

Factor 3, the Flexible Leadership perspective, is characterized by the influence and stewardship. Flexible Leadership is an extraverted and authentic leadership style that genuinely cares about doing good for others. Leaders who engage in a Flexible Leadership style are focused on the needs of the people around them and are vocal about wanting to share their caring philosophy. Flexible Leadership is not exploitative, entitled, or hostile. Figure 5 is a composite Q-Sort of the perceived efficacy of Flexible Leadership characteristics during times of chaotic change.

**Figure 5**

*Factor 3 Composite sort: Flexible leadership*

-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
Exploitative	Lacking Self-Awareness	Uniqueness	Empowering	Community Building	Caring	Listening
Lacking Empathy	Admiration-Seeking	Visionary	Attractive	Ethical	Credibility	Trust
Superior	Aggression	Dominant	Independent	Extraverted	Modeling	Authentic
Entitled	Self-Centered	Spiritual	Conceptualizing	Altruistic	Relational	Influence
Arrogant	Grandiose	Risk-Taking	Healing	Service	Sharing Leadership	Stewardship
Hostile	Self-Aggrandizing	Inflexible	Visioning	Positive Self-Regard/Self Esteem	Charisma & Passion	Humility
			Developing People			
			Sensitivity to Criticism			

Factor 3, Flexible Leadership, was the weakest of the three factors, with only 3% of the total explained variance. This factor did, however, have three Q-Sorts distinctly load on it, making it important to include it in the factor solution. The three participants

who loaded on this factor included two men and one woman, two had doctoral degrees, the other a master's degree, two had more than 20 years of experience and held C-suite positions in organizations ranging from 11-50 employees up to over 1000 employees. Of these three Q-Sorts, one of the participants engaged in a follow-up interview to share more of their perspective on leadership in times of chaotic change. With consensus statements removed, the characteristics that this participant considered highly effective in their interview were *relational*, *influence*, and *humility*. This participant also considered *grandiose*, and *self-centered* to be highly ineffective.

### ***Relational***

This leader perceived that being focused on building and maintain the relationships within their team was a large part of their success during the COVID-19 pandemic. He said,

*“So, I think that team kind of had their communication, mojo worked out in advance and it didn't depend on being in the same place all the time. And that was hugely helpful. And that wasn't so much about leadership. That was more on everybody else, right? Or just sort of everybody doing their part being a good team in general.” (Participant 1022)*

### ***Influence***

Using power and influence to motivate a team was also perceived as completely effective during the COVID-19 pandemic. Aggressive pursuit of goals was necessary in some circumstances, and that trying to restrain that aggression was counterproductive. A participant mentioned,

*“You want people to come to work and have a feeling of urgency and like what they're doing is important and want to take action. And sometimes that may turn into aggression. When that aggression becomes frustrated in some way and the aggression turns toward the people, that's a disaster. That'll kill your credibility in no time. Hostility, if you're showing any hostility to your employees, you're immediately reducing their productivity and the degree to which they give a shit.”*

(Participant 1022)

### **Humility**

Having the awareness of a leader's own limitations and being humble in the face of truly novel and unknowable challenges was perceived as completely effective during the COVID-19 pandemic. A participant described it by saying,

*“And for the time being, until we know more about COVID, because this was still in the period where we didn't know anything, really, until we really know more about what's going on with COVID, we really do have to take the safety to kind of an extreme level before we can back off. So I think there are ways to let them know that you understand their grievance or their discomfort or the degree to which they're being inconvenienced without throwing the rest of the organization under the bus. And being able to navigate those situations and come off as honest and transparent and not like you're hiding things, it goes a really long way.”*  
(Participant 1022)

### **Grandiose**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, being grandiose was perceived to be not only an indication of a lack of leadership competence, but also an indictment of a leader's appreciation for those around them. This participant describes their experience with grandiose leadership below.

*“So grandiose and self-aggrandizing, if you appear to be making these things about you and people will know that when you're behind closed doors with other managers or you're managing up, you're taking a lot of credit for their work, right? And that's gonna really pull you under with a lot of people, especially when you have a slew of PhDs working for you who really know what they know, right? So that's a big part of it. The empathy piece, lacking in empathy, that gets back to sort of the robotic manager kind of thing. People need to know you're a human. They need to know that what they're frustrated about, you're frustrated about, too, maybe, right?”* (Participant 1022)

### **Self-Centered**

Being self-centered during times of chaotic change was perceived to be highly ineffective. A participant said,

*“I think anytime a leader looks self-serving in an organization, like they're more worried about their next promotion than getting the next right thing done with the team and for the team and for the business, that's really bad.” (Participant 1022)*

### ***Flexible Leadership Distinguishing Statements***

Table 12 depicts the Factor 3 Distinguishing Statements. In the perspective of Flexible Leadership, with a 95% confidence rate, empowering is perceived to be completely effective, extraverted is perceived to be effective, risk-taking is perceived to be ineffective, and empowering and developing people is perceived to be neutral.

**Table 12**

#### *Factor 3 Distinguishing Statements*

Factor 3			
Threshold	Q-Sort Value	State. No.	Statement
P < 0.005	1	24	Extraverted
P < 0.05	3	4	Influence
P < 0.05	0	10	Empowering
P < 0.05	0	21	Developing People
P < 0.05	-1	29	Risk-Taking
P < 0.1	-3	25	Superior
P < 0.1	-1	30	Inflexible
P < 0.1	-1	31	Dominant
P < 0.1	3	44	Stewardship
P < 0.2	-1	15	Visionary
P < 0.2	0	23	Conceptualizing

### **Consensus Statements**

Many of the executives interviewed for this study remarked on common themes: listening to constituents, trusting their teams and organizations, not being arrogant, and

showing empathy. These characteristics were also designated as consensus statements in the statistical analysis of the Q-Sort data. Consensus statements do not distinguish between any pair of factors but are consistent across all factors.

### ***Trust***

Trust was scored highest by participants, +3 in each of the three factors.

Participants who mentioned trust discussed the importance of reciprocal trust leading to better decision-making, creating more motivation in teams that are experiencing chaotic change, as well as the benefit of trust in creating more successful leaders. Some of the participants' quotes are below.

*“...but is he going to do everything he can to ensure that I am successful and I am going to survive? If those individuals believe those two things, they will get up out of that fighting hole and willingly go in it and sacrifice their life.” (Participant 1014)*

*“And if we can come together as a team and be the right type of leaders, then that makes it easier for them to be individual leaders of their various departments and their divisions throughout the organization.” (Participant 1017)*

*“So giving them the freedom to make decisions obviously with safety and in mind and product quality in mind and also being forgiven in that period. You know, if you're going to empower and you're going to trust, I need it to also allow them to make mistakes, so that's where empathy and forgiveness takes place.” (Participant 1031)*

### ***Listening***

Listening was one of the highest-scored characteristics in each factor. It was scored +3 in Factor 1 and Factor 3, and +2 in Factor 2. The quotes regarding these consensus statements emphasized the importance of spending time with teams listening to their challenges for mental health purposes, but also to learn more about ways to better serve the organization, and to prepare for unforeseen challenges in the future and new

approaches to those challenges that could be utilized by the organization. Many participants discussed the importance of listening.

*“So spend less time responding to the noise and focusing on more of what we can control as an organization.” (Participant 1017)*

*“...And the more time that went by between touch points, the more somebody's mind can just start to make up stories that are not real.” (Participant 1026)*

*“...those who are very entrenched in the work and just ensuring that they're heard out, They're valued, they are prioritized in the know of what's going on and really just kind of taking that effort to make those changes and those strides but also do it in a way that keeps them in the forefront of the mind at all steps of the way.” (Participant 1029)*

*“And, you know, every time something happened like that people were distressed and they needed to talk. And we did a lot of all staff meetings where people were just able to vent a little bit and to talk.” (Participant 1033)*

*“So, they wanted to, you know, they were having some issues they were able to talk to somebody in confidence and know that it had nothing, you know, nothing to do with being dangerous or nothing like that. But I thought it was very important for our staff mental health to make sure they had access to that service also.” (Participant 1036)*

*“There were a lot of people who had a lot of feelings that needed to be heard during that, especially during that first four or five months, you know, and then in that organization to one of our most beloved employees got sick with COVID ... And sometimes you found yourself listening to things that had nothing to do with work. But I think in terms of just being-- there's credibility as a manager, and also credibility as being a human. And coming off as human kind of matters more than people want to believe. So, I did listen to a lot of things that had nothing to do with work and tried to make people feel heard.” (Participant 1022)*

### ***Arrogant***

The characteristic of arrogance was one of the lowest scoring consistency statements, ranking -3 in Factor 1, -1 in Factor 2, and -3 in Factor 3. Those who mentioned arrogance identified the characteristic as a violation of core organizational values, preventing the free exchange of ideas, and compromising organizational success.

*“You can be the funniest, handsomest, best leader around. But if you don’t accomplish the mission, you fail. Whatever that mission is, you’ve got to accomplish the mission.” (Participant 1014)*

*“And we are pretty clear here that based on our core values, if people can’t abide by and live by those core values, we make decisions pretty quickly to move them along out of the organization. So, people either will self-select out quickly or we will move them out quickly.” (Participant 1017)*

*“If that arrogance starts to come out, some really smart people with master’s degrees are going to stop opening their mouths. And that really limits the ideas you have access to.” (Participant 1022)*

### ***Lacking Empathy***

Lacking empathy was the lowest scoring statement in all three factorings, scoring -3 in each factor composite. Empathy and care for others within organizations was a common theme, as well as the lack of empathy. Participants spoke of their experiences working for and around leaders who lacked empathy, and the impact that had on their development in organizations. The roundly agreed that a lack of care and empathy from leadership undermined trust and connection, while simultaneously undermining the efficacy of organizational goals.

*“Do you know what in the hell you're doing? And are you going to do your best to take care of me?” (Participant 1014)*

*“So if you're a new leader and you're looking for some guidance, you should never feel that, you should never be afraid to feel like you can make a mistake or you should be able to come to your leader and say, hey, I wanna measure twice and cut once as opposed to feeling like you're scared to go to the person that's actually supposed to be there guiding you. And again, it go back to communication, how do you speak to people? And that's verbal, that's email, no text message, how you address people.” (Participant 1036)*

*“And just trying to really take time to connect with people and display human connection and empathy was important. I think actually what got us through this was the ability to connect as human beings.” (Participant 1031)*

Participants in this study agreed, both in their sorts and also their interviews, that during times of chaotic change, it was important for leadership to develop even closer relationships with direct reports and teams, and to use that closeness to build trust and confidence between members of their organizations and outside stakeholders in order to better address their needs and to plan for the uncertainty in the future.

While listening, trust, lacking arrogance, and having empathy were common themes across all participants, each individual factor showed subtle differences in how other characteristics could be applied to achieve effective leadership during times of chaotic change.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter provided the results and findings from the analysis of Q-Sort and interview data to answer the research question, “What leadership characteristics do leaders find effective during times of chaotic change?” To address this question, I have provided the results in the form of three leadership perspectives that emerged from aggregating quantitative data and integrating qualitative data:

1. Traditional Leadership
2. Chaotic Leadership
3. Flexible Leadership

Each of these factors, while unique, align on the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of characteristics, like the efficacy of listening and trust, as well as the inefficacy of arrogance and the lack of empathy. However, each factor differs from the others in subtle, yet critical ways. Traditional Leadership, named for its alignment with commonly used leadership characteristics, highlights a leadership style that focuses on the health and

well-being of followers and the organization through the use of mostly Servant Leader characteristics. Chaotic Leadership, named for its inclusion of more Narcissistic Leadership characteristics, reflects a leadership style that places more emphasis on leader persona. The title of Flexible implies that this leadership style is strongly correlated with Traditional Leadership but emphasizes characteristics of Narcissistic Leadership in ways that may allow the leader to shift between their personal leadership presence and the needs of their team. Except for neutrality around both highly narcissistic leadership characteristics and strongly servant leadership characteristics like sensitivity to criticism and independence, as well as healing and developing people, this style suggests a leadership style that focuses on leaders being flexible enough to maintain the core functions of the team during a crisis, while also being able to shift characteristics to a more “leader centered” approach when required.

In the next chapter, I use the results from this chapter to present interpretations, limitations, conclusions, and recommendations.

## **Chapter 5: Interpretations, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious. The latter procedure, however, is disagreeable and therefore not popular. (Carl Jung, Collected Works 13, "Alchemical Studies," p. 265)

This chapter discusses the interpretations, conclusions, and recommendations emerging from this study. First, I summarized and interpreted the results reported in Chapter 4, in order to contextualize the results within existing literature. Using the interpretation of results, I drew several conclusions.

1. Leadership literature that bifurcates these two models of leadership do not accurately reflect the perception of leaders in organizations today.
2. Leaders perceive both Narcissistic Leader and Servant Leader characteristics to be effective and ineffective during times of chaotic change, like the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Three distinct leadership styles emerged from this study, indicating that leaders perceive multiple styles of leadership to be effective in times of chaotic change.

After the interpretation of results and conclusions, I provided recommendations to further the research of leadership in research and practice, as well as how organizations can implement leadership development practices that will benefit leaders, teams, and organizations during chaotic change, and during times of stability.

### **Interpretations and Conclusions**

This study examined the experience of executive decision-makers across multiple industries during the COVID-19 pandemic, a time of chaotic change, and their perceptions of leadership characteristics in that time. I grounded this study in the two leadership paradigms of Dark Leadership (Conger, 1990; Harms et al., 2011; McCleskey,

2013), specifically Narcissistic Leadership (Campbell et al., 2011; O'Boyle et al., 2013; Spain et al., 2013), and New Leadership (Bass, 2008), specifically Servant Leadership (Greenleaf, 1970; van Dierendonck, 2011). The use of context as a variable was grounded in the paradigm of chaotic change (Karp & Helgø, 2008; 2009). The study posed one research question: What are leaders' perception of effective leadership characteristics in times of chaotic change?

Leadership became even more important during the COVID-19 pandemic (Maak et al., 2021), but organizations struggled with leadership during that time. Given the increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous times (Bennis, 2007; Uhl-Bein et al., 2007; Kellerman 2018), leadership development, led by leadership research and theory, is a reasonable solution. But leadership in practice is ineffective because leadership theory is ineffective. Leadership theory and research have largely failed to consider the breadth of effective leadership characteristics (Yammarino, 2013) in organizations, the impact of context on leadership characteristics (Kaiser et al., 2008), or the perspectives of leaders in organizations (Kellerman, 2004). The lack of effective leadership theory and research has created a lack of effective models for implementation in organizations.

This study used two opposing leadership theories, Narcissistic Leadership and Servant Leadership, with the goal of understanding how leaders perceived those characteristics in a specific context; chaotic change. Narcissistic leadership theory grew out of the literature around the Dark Triad (Furnham et al., 2013), narcissism, Machiavellianism, and corporate psychopathy, which were all heavily informed by the theory and study of clinical disorders in psychological literature. Servant leadership

theory (Greenleaf, 1970; Van Dierendonck, 2020) is one of the New Leadership theories (Bass, 2008) that includes Transformational Leadership, Authentic Leadership, and Charismatic Leadership, all of which focus on socially desirable leader characteristics. Narcissistic Leadership, by definition, lacks empathy, where Servant Leadership, by definition, is non-narcissistic. The Servant Leadership movement has been a popular subject of study since its introduction in the 1970s, but had also become a popular practical methodology, widely espoused in leadership development spheres.

A majority of empirical leadership literature, as well as copious amounts of anecdotal evidence, shows that narcissistic leadership creates a toxic culture that is counterproductive to the needs of employees and organizations, but some (Maccoby, 2004) suggest that leaders high in narcissism would be ideally suited to volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous circumstances (Brunzel, 2020). So, these characteristics were contextualized through the lens of a chaotic change event, the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study advances the research of leadership by expanding the definition of effective leadership to include characteristics of narcissistic leaders, through the study of experienced leaders during a rare and highly impactful time of chaotic change. From this research, three distinct perspectives of effective leadership during times of chaotic change, like the COVID-19 pandemic, emerged. These viewpoints have many attributes in common, indicating high agreement about what kind of leadership characteristics are effective during periods of chaotic change. They do, however, differ in significant ways.

### ***The Traditional Leadership***

The Traditional Leadership style is stability-oriented and morally anchored. It is based on trust, ethical behavior, humility, and service. The leaders in this study found trust, caring, ethical behavior, authenticity, humility, credibility, sharing leadership, developing people and charisma and passion to be the most effective characteristics. Leaders in this styles also perceived aggression, superiority, arrogance, grandiosity, self-centeredness, exploitative behaviors, inflexibility, entitlement, self-aggrandizing, and hostility to be the least effective characteristics. Many of the characteristics participants selected as effective in the Traditional Leadership factor are well-grounded in the theory of Servant Leadership and are well documented in the literature. Servant Leadership has been known to be effective in organization, with the caveat that it is not effective in every circumstance. Kellerman (2018) suggested that other leadership styles, or different characteristics, may be more useful in some organizational cultures, and in different contexts. The percentage of explained variance of this factor being 79% supports previous studies of Servant Leadership, which show that it is highly effective. The 11 of 15 participants who loaded onto the Traditional Leadership factor also support the idea the Servant Leadership characteristics are highly effective, specifically in times of chaotic change.

### ***The Chaotic Leadership***

The foundation of the Chaotic Leadership style is trust- and ethics-based, collaborative, and empowering of its followers, but does center around the leader. Leaders in this style perceived the most effective characteristics to be trust, empowering others, spiritual grounding, self-confidence and self-centeredness, caring, ethical

behavior, altruism, humility, listening, and modeling. Leaders in this style perceived the characteristics of inflexibility, risk-taking, exploitation, dominance, grandiosity, lacking in empathy, extraversion, and community building to be ineffective during times of chaotic change. Many of the characteristics that were seen as effective in the Chaotic Leadership factor are also Servant Leadership characteristics, but several effective characteristics are considered part of Narcissistic Leadership, such as positive self-regard and self-centeredness. Other characteristics of Narcissistic Leadership were considered neutral in this factor composite, such as hostility, entitlement, exploitativeness, aggression, and entitlement. This supports the idea that, again, Servant Leader characteristics are highly effective, even in times of chaotic change, but that some of the characteristics of Narcissistic Leadership are also highly effective, or neutral during times of chaotic change. This supports the theories that suggest that Narcissistic Leadership can be effective in times of chaotic change (Maccoby, 2008). Although only one participant loaded onto this factor, it also explains 6% of variance in this study, suggesting that while it may not be the most effective form of leadership, it is the second-most effective leadership style in times of chaotic change. This factor also suggests that in times of chaotic change, leadership characteristics that are more narcissistic are considered more neutral.

### ***The Flexible Leadership***

Leaders in the Flexible Leadership style have an open-minded, flexible, and relationally driven leadership style. The characteristics these leaders find effective during times of chaotic change are listening, trust, authenticity, influence, stewardship, and humility. The characteristic these leaders find least effective are exploitative, superior,

entitled, arrogant, lacking in empathy, and hostility. The Flexible Leadership style is highly correlated to the Traditional Leadership style, sharing 89% of characteristics between them. This, again, supports the research into Servant Leadership as an effective style, although there are significant differences between these two factors. While Traditional Leadership in this study consisted of characteristics that supported the team and organization, Flexible Leadership characteristics are more leader-centric, focused on an influential and extroverted leader while the characteristic that would support the team, like empowering and developing others are considered neutral. This Flexible Leadership factor explains 3% of the total variance in this study, and contained three participants, making it the least popular of the three factors in this study's solution, while still being meaningful perspective.

### **Summary of Interpretations of Results**

While distinct, each of these leadership styles show consensus in the most effective leadership characteristics. The characteristics that leaders perceive to be effective during times of chaotic change are relational integrity through trust, listening, and authenticity, a moral and ethical foundation through ethics, humility, and sharing leadership, as well as a rejection of many toxic traits like arrogance, hostility, grandiosity and lacking in empathy. These styles are a mixture of both dark and bright leader characteristics, indicating that leaders perceive elements of Servant Leadership and Narcissistic Leadership to be effective in times of change, working together in service of the organizational goals.

The differences in each style suggest a more nuanced approach to leadership during chaotic change. The Traditional Leadership style focuses on the team, valuing

characteristics that create long-term stability and effectiveness as a team, while rejecting characteristics that would undermine the group's attitude and performance. In other words, the Traditional Leadership style leans heavily on servant leader characteristics of trust, listening, and ethics, while still using narcissistic visioning to anticipate future challenges.

Chaotic Leadership, while supportive of the team, is more leader-focused, placing control into the hands of the leader and their well-being. Chaotic Leadership rejects inflexible, grandiose leadership that lacks empathy, but also does not find developing people, community building, extraversion, or risk-taking to be effective in times of chaotic change. That said, the Chaotic Leadership style uses narcissistic positive self-esteem and charisma to insulate their teams from emotional disruption, while exercising more leader control through risk aversion, and influencing behavior by modeling ideal team-strengthening characteristics like trust and humility.

Flexible Leadership describes an outwardly engaged and adaptive leadership style that cares deeply for the people around them and rejecting toxic traits but also emphasizes the influence and control of the leader. This suggests that the Flexible Leadership style describes in-the-moment, extraverted, charismatic leadership that is uses their energy to engage teams but is more ambivalent to characteristics that are more future oriented, like visioning and empowerment.

In this study, Factors 1 and 3 were particularly interesting because of their high correlation, 88.7%, while Factor 2 had a correlation of roughly 41% between itself and Factors 1 and 3, respectively. This correlation indicates that these two factors are quite similar, but not the same. The largest difference in statements between them is in their

scoring of the characteristics “visionary,” “visioning,” “empowering,” “risk-taking,” and “developing people,” which were all scored less effective by participants in Factor 3. This indicates that the Flexible Leader style is less interested in the larger picture, instead addressing the immediate needs of the group through leader control, as opposed to Factor 1, in which the leader seeks to develop their groups. Leaders in Factor 1 describe the importance of long-term development for organizations hoping to be resilient to chaotic change, however leaders in Factor 3 discussed the need for creativity in creating “clever solutions” (1022) while also emphasizing strong leader control in implementation and zero tolerance for team members who are not able to operate “within the limits of what is acceptable in the business” (1022). This strongly signals a flexible approach to leadership using a mixture of leadership characteristics. Factor 1 had 11 of the 15 participants in this study load onto it, which confirms that it is a popular leadership style, while Factor 3 had three participants load on it, making it a somewhat more unusual choice for leaders.

In times of chaotic change, like the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders perceive a mixture of dark and bright leader characteristics to be effective in leading their organizations effectively. Some participants explicitly voiced the value of consensus statements, characteristics that were highly ranked across all three factors, outside of chaotic change events.

## **Conclusions**

To conclude, three key insights emerged from this research study. While these points were introduced at the beginning of the chapter, they are reiterated here to highlight their significance and to provide a foundation for the recommendations that follow.

1. Leadership literature that bifurcates these two models of leadership do not accurately reflect the perception of leaders in organizations today.
2. Leaders perceive both Narcissistic Leader and Servant Leader characteristics to be effective and ineffective during times of chaotic change, like the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Three distinct leadership styles emerged from this study, indicating that leaders perceive multiple styles of leadership to be effective in times of chaotic change.

Based on the interpretation of these results, I have drawn several conclusions to form the recommendations for the next section.

### **Recommendations**

Using the results, interpretations, and conclusions of this Q methodology study on leadership in times of chaotic change, I offer recommendations for both researchers and practitioners to improve the quality data collected in service of the study of leadership, and its application to leadership in practice, as well as leadership development in organizations going forward. The recommendations in this section should be interpreted within the scope of this research, which was limited to 15 participants, across a variety of industries in the United States of America. This means that the results of this study cannot be generalized across every role in any organization. Results are limited to these 15 participants.

Much of the value of this study comes from the context in which it was set. By studying leadership in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, these results are tightly bound to the COVID-19 pandemic specifically. While we may never again experience an event like the COVID-19 pandemic in our lifetimes, its novelty and wide-spread impact

make the data collected in this study valuable for not only leadership generally, but also leadership during times of chaotic change. This study offers a path for more effective leadership research moving forward.

### ***Recommendations for Leadership Research and Theory***

This study further demonstrates the complexity of leadership. By using two diametrically opposed leadership theories, this study found that leaders in times of chaotic change value the characteristics of two previously thought-to-be conflicting leadership styles, a similar finding to the study of the relationship between Transactional and Transformational Leadership (Avolio & Bass, 1999). Future empirical studies are needed to explore and investigate the relationships between other, seemingly opposed, leadership styles, and the perceived efficacy or inefficacy of the characteristics of all leadership styles.

This study found that leaders agree on the most effective and most ineffective leadership characteristics during a time of chaotic change, and they include both narcissistic leadership and servant leadership characteristics. I recommend that future leadership studies incorporate more diverse leader characteristics into the study of leadership by including more leadership models. This study design could be used to examine the other leadership models such as Transformational and Transactional Leadership, Machiavellianism and Authentic Leadership, or Servant Leadership and corporate psychopathy. It would be valuable to see leaders' perspectives of these theoretical models that can advance leadership theory and research.

I recommend that those studies also examine more diverse sets of characteristics in more diverse settings and contexts. This study itself brought many new questions to

mind that were outside the scope of this specific study. Would these Narcissistic Leadership characteristics be as valuable in times of non-chaotic change? Do certain industries respond differently to different characteristics? How do followers perceive these characteristics? This study was designed to better understand the perception of leaders, and to this end, participants were not given definitions of the characteristics that they sorted, leaving them to decide what these characteristics mean to them, and how they interpret their efficacy. Because of this intentional design choice, future research should include further investigation of the ways that leaders interpret leadership characteristics.

I recommend that future leadership research seek to develop more inclusive leadership theory. While it is certainly interesting to find that leaders use many different leadership characteristics to achieve the goals of their organizations, it is clear that more theory development is needed if scholars wish to understand the phenomena of the leadership relationship. In Organizational Leadership, there is a normal tension between the needs of the leader and the needs of the organization. Both needs must be met in order for the leadership relationship to be successful. This tension requires leaders to exist in a paradox between self-interest and servant orientation. Future inquiries into more balanced, humanistic, and natural leadership styles may find a continued theme of both bright and dark characteristics, existing together harmoniously, potentially contributing to the needs of the leader and the needs of the organization being satisfied.

Some participants also commented that these characteristics became more important, given the global COVID-19 pandemic. However, others were very clear in expressing that they found some characteristics to be effective before the pandemic as

well. By incorporating context as a variable in future studies of leadership and leadership characteristics, empirical literature can start to find more connections between the leader, their circumstance, and the outcomes. This study was situated squarely in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, because of the widespread impact of that context. However, future researchers should examine the transferability of these results in other chaotic contexts. Models that include more variables, like different contexts, models that include more diverse variables, like dark leadership characteristics, and models that compare opposing variables, like Narcissistic and Servant Leadership characteristics, can improve the applicability of leadership literature to real leaders.

I recommend that leadership scholars use real leaders, rather than their heroic impressions or incomplete historical data, in developing the models of leadership that inform both research and practice. Since the early days of leadership study, few models have been informed by research into leadership “in situ,” in the real world (Clifton, 2017). From upper echelon theory (Hambrick & Mason, 1984), we know that leadership has a significant impact on the culture and practice of organizations. Leadership research, however, has had little contact with the real leaders they have studied, preferring secondary data from publicly available resources. I specifically designed this study to easily examine the perception of executive decision-makers directly. Keeping in mind factors like ease of participation, the population’s time commitments, and flexibility. I also heavily leveraged my own networks to reach the exact population that I believed it was important to study.

While using executives as a population can be challenging, it is well worth the effort to be able to collect primary data on the population under examination. Moreover,

the discussions I was able to have with these leaders gave me an added insight into their thought processes and more information about the topics that would be valuable to them in future studies, such as resources for developing leadership, processes and procedures that are lacking in their organizations, and their specific views on research in general.

I also recommend that researchers consider using Q-Sort methodology when designing future studies. I have spent many years designing and conducting research, and I have never experienced a more enjoyable data collection process. The Q-Sort Touch Tool made designing, implementing, and facilitating the Q process very easy. By using Q-Sort, I was able to gain my participants' interest, collect their data, and analyze it in a timely manner. In their post-sort interviews, participants expressed their interest and engagement in the sorting process, which they said held their attention and made them think about their experiences during COVID-19 more deeply and consider the characteristics thoroughly before deciding where to place them. Because Q is a less commonly used methodology, I suspect that the novelty in the process was also a source of curiosity, which kept participants more engaged. I had very few issues with participants needing assistance using the Q-Sort Touch Tool. Q methodology has the benefit of being scientifically rigorous, while still being easy to use and engaging for participants, which adds to the validity of the data collected.

### ***Recommendations for Leadership Practice***

The challenges of leadership begin with leader selection. This study shows that leaders perceive a variety of characteristics to be effective in times of chaotic change. These characteristics are derived from two opposing leadership styles, which are rooted in a variety of personality traits and structures. Much of the research around dark

leadership has stressed that these leaders are toxic (Padilla et al., 2007; Spain et al., 2014). While this certainly can be true, there are studies that suggest value in the traits exhibited by these individuals (Maccoby, 2008), particularly at the subclinical level. Anecdotal evidence of organizations selecting toxic leaders is certainly prevalent, and the results of their leadership have been mixed (Kellerman, 2008).

By understanding these styles better, leadership and leadership development practitioners can better assess the qualities required of leaders in organizations, using that information to refine selection criteria, and build development opportunities and boundaries from the beginning of their tenures. I recommend that leadership and development practitioners begin applying more inclusive models of leadership to their leadership selection processes, by identifying the types of traits that might be useful to the organization at that time and comparing them to potential leaders, but also so that development opportunities and systemic solutions can be put in place to support the entire organization, regardless of individual leader styles.

From the research available, it is clear that leadership development is necessary and effective in enhancing the performance of organizations. However, the leadership development industry is operating on the outdated theories. The most popular leadership theory in practice at this time is Servant Leadership, which was developed by Greenleaf in the 1970s, now more than 50 years old. While character is important to the long-term success of leaders, their teams, and their organizations, much has changed in the science of leadership since the 1970s and even more has changed in the practice of leadership given the contexts with which leaders must contend.

Leaders in organizations today need evidence-based leadership development processes to aid them in achieving their goals in a world that continuously presents them with new and impactful challenges. In order to meet these needs, new and impactful theories of leadership should be applied to leadership development in practice. Effective leadership will not naturally emerge in every context with every individual leader, but there are interventions that can smooth interactions between individual leaders, their followers, and their contexts, as long as leadership development can adapt to the needs of that situation.

A challenge of leadership development in practice is that it can be short-term goal oriented. Leadership development practitioners are not often given access to organizations for periods of decades to study and refine leadership development practices, which can lead to implementing practices that make the most immediate positive impact, but may not consider longer-term effects. New development fads come and go, with less and less effect, as participants become jaded to constant changes. There is a need for a broader set of instruments for data collection and analysis, a broader set of tools and skills for intervention, and a broader understanding of the contexts in which these variables operate together for the achievement of common goals in the long-term. I recommend that the leadership development community incorporate a broader, more humanistic attitude toward the characteristics of individual leaders, and the ways in which they might develop to become more effective.

Changing personality is not, nor should it ever be a goal for workplace development. However, there are avenues for development that are beneficial to individuals and their organizations. For example, executive coaching with a focus on

understanding personality is an example of humanistic leadership development. By giving clients the opportunity to understand their innate leadership characteristics, an executive coach can help them develop strategies for using them effectively in their organizations, as well as giving the client a better understanding, over time, of the contexts in which their characteristics can be most effectively used. These practices can also be facilitated in team settings to create more effective team dynamics. Using multiple models, in multiple settings, individuals at all levels can gain a better understanding of themselves and the role they play in the efficacy of organizational initiatives.

Finally, it is most important to use these leadership insights to better mitigate harm to organizations and their stakeholders from malicious actors. From the scholarly leadership literature, the characteristics that I explored in this study do not rise to the level of clinical disorder and should not be considered dangerous. However, many of these characteristics can become dysfunctional, to varying degrees, when inappropriately applied. By examining when these characteristics are perceived to be effective or ineffective, it becomes easier to plan for the challenges that could arise when they are used inappropriately. Leadership without clear expectations or accountability is more likely to become harmful.

This study demonstrates remarkable consensus about what is considered ineffective leadership during times of chaotic change. Knowing this creates an avenue for change. Through assessment or observation, I recommend that leadership and development practitioners use this information to evaluate which leaders in their organizations are struggling and need intervention. Once those leaders are identified,

organizations can develop a plan for individual and team development practices that can then be used across the organization in situations where leadership characteristics are misapplied. When leaders with less effective characteristics are identified, they can be given development opportunities, shifted into roles that align more closely with their behavioral tendencies, or removed from the organization all together.

## **Summary**

This dissertation investigated the perspectives of executive leaders on the leadership characteristics that they found effective or ineffective during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research reviewed current models of leadership and revealed several ways in which those models were incomplete (Kaiser et al., 2008; Kellerman, 2004; Yammarino, 2013). In this study, participants explored their perspectives of characteristics of both narcissistic leadership and servant leadership using a Q-Sort activity, and later in optional interviews. The results of this study revealed the participants' viewpoints on how both narcissistic and servant leadership characteristics are blended to create effective leadership, in this context of chaotic change. I then analyzed these perspectives for commonalities and differences, incorporating participants' voices in quotes from their interviews. Three distinct perspectives emerged: Traditional Leadership, Chaotic Leadership, and Flexible Leadership. Additionally, each of those perspectives agreed on the efficacy or inefficacy of four characteristics of the 44 leadership characteristics they sorted, which were listening, trust, arrogant, and lacking empathy.

This study, while limited in its number of participants, highlights key insights and conclusions, leading to recommendations for both researchers and practitioners alike. It is

my goal that this study broadens perspectives of leadership. For researchers, I recommend incorporating a more diverse set of leadership characteristics in their studies of existing leadership models, and into new models. I also recommend that they include context as a variable in leadership research in the future. Lastly, that researchers work to include actual leaders in their study of leadership in organizations. Although their perspectives may be challenging to research, they are very valuable in the study of leadership in organizations.

For practitioners, I recommend developing a broader list of effective leadership characteristics, especially as the world becomes more unpredictable and chaotic, and using more diverse and inclusive leadership models to evaluate and select leadership candidate. Additionally, by acknowledging the characteristics that leaders are actually using in times of chaotic change, measures can be put in place to reduce harm to the organization from the characteristics that are inappropriately applied.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

The COVID-19 pandemic was a really hard time in my life. During that time, I saw myself and others were desperate for leadership. Those in positions of power were experiencing all the same things we were and the weight of our need for their strength and direction. I am in awe of the leaders who participated in this study, not just for their ability to succeed during a time of chaotic change, but also for their self-awareness, openness, and ability to communicate their experience to me.

Narcissism in leadership is as popular a topic as it is controversial. I believe that it is important to have as much data as practical in order to fix a problem, and narcissism in leadership is a problem. My goal in this study has always been to demystify the construct

of leadership so that we facilitate better leadership. I hope my contribution leads to that goal in some small way.

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## Appendix A: Literature Review Concourse of Communication

### Servant Leadership Characteristics

Servant Leadership	6	5	5	12	20	11	7	3	11	9	6	10	7	8	5
Laub, 1999, p. 83	Faring, Stone, & Winston, 1999	Bass, 2000	Page & Wong, 2000	Russell & Stone, 2002	Barbuto & Wheeler 2006	Patterson, 2003	Bass & Avolio, 2004	Greenleaf, 1970	Liden et al., 2008	Sendjaya, Sarros, Santos, 2008	Spears, 2010	van Dierendonck, 2011	van Deirendonck & Nuijten, 2011	Boone and Makhani 2012	Liden, Panaccia, Meuser, Hu Wayne, 2014
values people	vision	vision	integrity	vision	calling	agapao love	moral development	moral charismatic	emotionally healing	transforming influence	listening	empowering people	empowerment	visioning	desire to see others
develops people	service	influence	humility	honesty	listening	acts with humility	service	humility	creating value for the community	voluntary subordination	empathy	developing people	humility	listening	emotional intelligence
builds community	influence	credibility	servanthood	integrity	empathy	altruistic	enhancement of common good	relational power	conceptual skills	authentic self	healing	humility	standing back	commitment to staff and their success	moral maturity
displays authenticity	credibility	trust	caring for others	trust	healing	visionary for the followers		autonomy	empowering	transcendental spirituality	awareness	authenticity	authenticity	giving power away	moral conal
provides leadership	trust	service	empowering others	service	awareness	trusting		moral development of followers	helping subordinates grow and succeed	covenantal relationship	persuasion	interpersonal acceptance	forgiveness	building community	prosocial identity
shares leadership			developing others	modeling	persuasion	servng		emulation of leaders' service orientation	putting subordinates first	responsible morality	conceptualization	providing direction	courage		core self-evaluation
			visioning	pioneering	conceptualization	empowers followers		altruistic calling	behaving ethically		foresight	stewardship	accountability		low in narcissism
			goal setting	appreciation of others	foresight			emotional healing	relationships		stewardship		stewardship		benevolent
			leading	empowerment	stewardship			wisdom	servanthood		commitment to the growth of people				caring
			modeling	communication	growth			persuasive mapping			community building				supportive
			team building	credibility	community building			organizational stewardship							
			shared decision-making	competence											
				stewardship											
				visibility											
				influence											
				persuasion											
				listening											
				encouragement											
				teaching											
				delegation											

# Narcissistic Leadership Characteristics

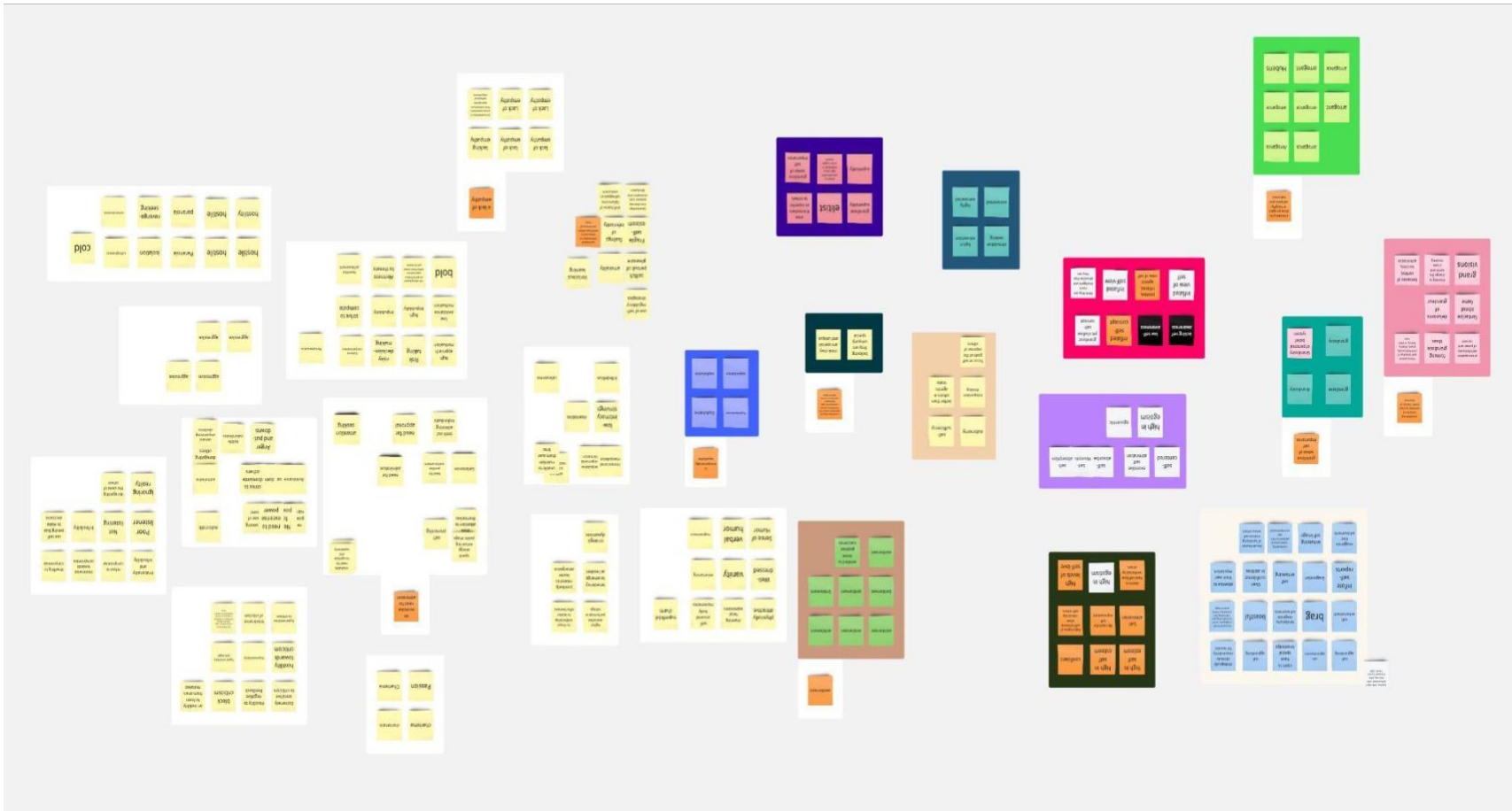
Narcissistic Leadership Characteristics	7	8	10	8	5	17	7	14	9	3	8	16	16	24	25	5	17	11
DSM-V, 2013	Raskas & Hart, 1981, NPI	Kelis de Vries & Miller, 1985	Paulhus, 1998	Conger & Kanungo, 1998	Morf & Rhoadeswall, 2001	Maccoby, 2003	Sedlitzke, Rudlich, Gregg, et al., 2004	Campbell, Goodlin, Foster, 2004	Rosenblatt & Pittinsky, 2006	Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007	Padilla, Hooper, Kaiser, 2007	Rosick et al., 2009	Judge, Piccolo, & Koslako, 2009	Higgs, 2009	Ouimet, 2010	Harms, Spont, & Hamzah, 2011	O'Boyle, Forsyth, Banks, & McDaniel, 2011	Crjshwa, Harms, Newman, Conditio, Frakley, 2015
grandiose sense of self importance	autonomy	Grandiose sense of self-importance or uniqueness	confident	ignoring reality	aggression	Visioning to change the world and create meaning	inversely related to depression	positive, inflated, agentic view of self	arrogance	Strategic Dynamism	dominance	inflated self-concept	arrogance	Grandiosity of personal belief system	charisma	Bold	hostile	Well-dressed
overwhelming fantasies of unlimited success, power, beauty, or ideal love	entitlement	Preoccupation with fantasies of unlimited success, power, illiance, beauty, or ideal love	entertaining	overestimating personal capabilities	derogating others		inversely related to daily sadness	use of self-regulatory strategies	feelings of inferiority	Strategic grandiosity	grandiosity	desire for recognition	self-absorption	Arrogance	a sense of entitlement	unusually self-confident	aggressive	charming facial expressions
a belief that they are special and unique and that they can only be understood by other individuals or institutions of similar superior status	exhibitionism	Exhibitionism	physically attractive	disregarding the views of others	self-aggrandizement		inversely related to loneliness	think they are special and unique	insatiable need for recognition and superiority	Extreme performance	arrogance	high degree of self-reference when interacting with others	entitlement	Self-Absorption	the pursuit of self-image goals, aimed at constructing and maintaining and protecting a strictly positive image	unwilling to admit mistakes or listen to advice	egocentric	self-assured body movements
an excessive need for admiration	exploitation	Cool indifference or marked feeling of rage, inferiority, shame, humiliation, or emptiness in response to criticism indifference of others or defeat	hostile	self-absorbed	low-intimacy strivings		positively related to subjective well-being	entitled to more positive outcomes	hypersensitivity and anger		entitlement	grandiose sense of self importance	hostility	Sense of entitlement	the attribution of humiliating traits to self versus others	unable to learn from experience	infedeltis	verbal humor
a sense of entitlement	self-sufficiency	Entitlement	arrogant	attention-seeking	focus on self goals at the expense of others	Charisma	positively related to couple well-being	think they are more intelligent and attractive than they are	lack of empathy		selfish pursuit of pleasure	tendency to exaggerate achievements	high levels of self-love	Fragile self-esteem	impulsivity	voracious learners	inflated view of self	highly extraverted
is interpersonally exploitative	superiority	Interpersonal exploitativeness	cold	claim to have special knowledge		Persistence	inversely related to anxiety	better than others in agentic traits	amorality	risky decision-making	preoccupation with fantasies of power and success	believing they are uniquely special	Hostility to negative feedback	unforgiveness	delusions of grandeur	skilful at intimidating relationships		
a lack of empathy	vanity	Relationships that alternate between over-idealization and devaluation	self-centered	demand unquestioning obedience		Alertness to threats	inversely related to neuroticism	fantacize about fame	irrationality and inflexibility	grand visions	excessive self admiration	entitled to praise and admiration	Inflated self-view	a desire for revenge	self-promoting	unable to maintain them over time		
a profound enviousness of others and a belief that others are envious of them		Lack of empathy	self-aggrandizing	self-serving abuse of power		Sense of Humor		strategically attribute responsibility for success	paranoia	lack of empathy	hostility towards criticism	grandiose yet shallow self-concept	Need for positive reinforcement	an inability to learn from one's mistakes	attention-seeking	self-enhancement		
a tendency to show arrogant or haughty attitudes and behaviors			dominant			Extremely sensitive to criticism		brag	autocratic		intolerance towards compromise	view themselves as superior to others	Attention-seeking	high approach motivation	fantasies of control, success, admiration	inflate self-reports		
			manipulative interpersonal orientation			Not listening		draw attention to themselves			arrogant	insensitive	Exploitativeness	low avoidance motivation	desire to have self-love reinforced by others	no linear relationship to leader effectiveness		
						Paranoia		strive to compete			forming grandiose ideas	hostile	Self-admiration	risk-taking based on performance expectations rather than actual performance	exaggerate their achievements	positively related to leader emergence		
						Extreme competitiveness		strive to dominate others			boastful	self enhancing	No room for self-improvement	an insensitivity to social constraints that undermines appropriate behavioral adjustments	block criticism			
						Anger and put-downs		desire to associate with high status individuals in order to gain esteem			aggressive	use self-serving bias to make decisions	Over-confidence in abilities	hypersensitive to criticism	refuse to compromise			
						Exaggeration		shift blame of failure onto colleagues or evaluators			elitist	attentive to their own reputation	Hubris	exaggerated need for admiration	seek out admiring individuals			
						Lack of self-knowledge					need for power and superiority	lacking empathy	Need for power	high impulsivity	extraverted			
						Isolation					spend energy enhancing public image	manipulating conversational patterns to their own accomplishments	Need for achievement	callousness	belittle subordinates			
						Grandiosity						Dominance	interpersonal manipulation	remorselessness	lacking self awareness			
												Intolerance of criticism	exploitation	superficial charm				
												Unwilling to compromise	stimulation seeking	high in egotism				
												Lack of empathy	remorselessness	high in self esteem				
												Need for admiration	high in egotism	need to exercise power				
												Hypersensitivity	high in self esteem	high in extraversion				
												Poor listener	high in self esteem					
												Inflexibility	high in self esteem					

## Appendix B: Miro Sort of Characteristics

### Servant Leadership Characteristics



# Narcissistic Leadership Characteristics



## Appendix C: Recruiting

### *Participant Recruitment Social Media Post*

#### LinkedIn Post

Headline: Calling All C-Suite Executives: Share Your Insights on Leadership During the Pandemic 🌟

My name is Erika Weed, and I am a doctoral student at George Washington University. I am conducting a groundbreaking research study on leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic, and I want to hear your perspective.

If you were a C-suite executive during the pandemic, your experience and perspectives are invaluable in shaping the future of leadership strategies. This is a unique opportunity to contribute to research that could redefine how organizations approach leadership and innovation.

#### Why Participate?

- ✅ Influence the development of future leadership models.
- ✅ Gain early access to insights from the study.
- ✅ Share your experiences anonymously in a way that benefits the entire business community.

The study involves a short assessment and an optional 30-minute confidential interview.

Interested, or know someone who is? PM me to sign up. Feel free to tag other executives who might be interested.

Together, let's advance the future of leadership!

#Leadership #ExecutiveInsights #LeadershipResearch

#### Reddit Post

Title: C-Suite Executives: We Want to Hear Your Insights on Leadership!

Hello, Reddit community! 🙌

My name is Erika Weed, and I am a doctoral student at George Washington University. I am conducting a groundbreaking research study on leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic, and we want to hear your perspective.

If you were a C-suite executive during the pandemic, your experience and perspectives are invaluable in shaping the future of leadership strategies. This is a unique opportunity to contribute to research that could redefine how organizations approach leadership and innovation.

Here's why you should participate:

- Influence the development of leadership strategies.
- Be part of shaping the next wave of business innovation.
- Receive early access to summarized findings from the study (all data is anonymized).

Participation is simple: choose between a short survey or a confidential 30-minute interview.

If you're interested, DM me, and I'll share the details. Know someone else in leadership? Feel free to share this post with them!

Let's collaborate to create a brighter future for leadership!

#Leadership #Business #Research

### ***Participant Recruitment Email***

“Dear (Participant),

Thank you so much for participating in this study of leadership characteristics in times of chaotic change. In Spring of 2020, the entire world was swept into the COVID-19 pandemic. In that year, and the years that have followed, organizations have faced increasing chaos and uncertainty. This chaos and uncertainty has made doing business more difficult, and added extra pressure to leaders. I want to know how you and the leaders you know have responded to chaos and uncertainty, and what characteristics of leadership you think have been most effective for leaders at this time.

This study uses a tool called Q-Sort. You will be asked to sort a variety of leadership characteristics into piles from most effective to least effective. At the conclusion of your sort, you will be asked several additional questions about your experiences during the sort. You will also be given the opportunity to participate in a post-sort interview, at your convenience, if you would like to give more information about your experiences of leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic or ask questions about this study.

If you would like to participate in this study, please follow the link below.

**<https://qt3admin.com/survey/32d04f37-6199-4d18-a8ed-3db2004b7501>**

## Appendix D: Statement of Consent

### **Informed Consent for Participation in a Research Study**

*Title of the Study: Leadership in Chaotic Change*

*Investigator: Erika Weed, GSEHD HOL, The George Washington University*

#### **Key Information:**

*You are invited to participate in a research study about leadership in times of chaotic change. This page will give you key information to help you decide whether or not you want to participate in this study. More detailed information can be found on the next pages. Ask the research team questions during the consent process, and use the contact information on this form to ask questions later.*

#### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE, PROCEDURES, AND DURATION OF THIS STUDY?**

*The purpose of this study is to better understand the characteristics that leaders use in times of chaotic change. We aim to create a more nuanced and effective model of leadership in organizations through a combination of digital Q-Sorting, follow-up questions, and interviews. Your participation is vital to understanding these dynamics and providing insights into effective leadership practices.*

*This study will collect data through two activities. The first activity is a digital sorting of leadership characteristics, and some follow-up questions. The second activity is a voluntary interview, scheduled at your convenience, after the digital sorting.*

*The confidentiality of your responses is of utmost importance. Identifiable information will be securely stored and will not be associated with your responses in any publications or presentations resulting from this research. Data will be confidential, ensuring that no individual participants can be identified. All digital data will be accessible only to the research team. Research findings will be presented in a form that preserves the anonymity of all participants.*

- *Activity 1: Digital Sorting exercise and follow-up questions.*
  - *you will be asked to sort a number of leadership characteristics into "productive" and "unproductive" categories, and then sort them again to describe how "productive" or "unproductive" they may be. Participation in this study should take approximately 30 minutes.*
  - *Follow-up questions are designed to collect more information about why participants sorted these characteristics in such a way.*
- *Activity 2: Voluntary Follow-Up Interview lasting 30-40 minutes, to ask follow up questions about the participant's experience in the sort.*

*Both activities will be virtual.*

### **WHAT ARE THE REASONS YOU MIGHT CHOOSE TO VOLUNTEER FOR THIS STUDY?**

*We aim to create a more nuanced and effective model of leadership in organizations so that leaders can be more effective in all contexts. By participating in this research, you will help us better understand how changes around leaders impacts their leadership choices. Your participation can help us help leaders.*

### **WHAT ARE THE REASONS YOU MIGHT NOT CHOOSE TO VOLUNTEER FOR THIS STUDY?**

*While this study poses minimal risk to participants, the following considerations should be noted:*

- 1. Emotional Discomfort: Discussing experiences related to leadership during chaotic change may evoke emotional reactions. Participants are encouraged to take breaks during the interview process if needed, and they may withdraw their participation at any point without any consequences.*
- 2. Data Security Risks: Although we implement strict security measures, there is always a minor risk of data breaches in any digital format. We will employ best practices to minimize this risk.*
- 3. Time Commitment: Participation involves completing a digital Q-Sort, answering follow-up questions, and engaging in an interview, which may require a significant amount of time. Participants should feel free to indicate their availability and any time constraints.*

### **DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?**

You do not have to take part in this research. It is your choice whether or not you want to take part. You can agree to take part and later change your mind. If you choose not to take part or choose to stop taking part at any time, there will be no penalty to you or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

### **WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?**

The person in charge of this study is Erika Weed.. If you have questions, suggestions, or concerns regarding this study or you want to withdraw from the study by contacting her: [erikaweed@gmail.com](mailto:erikaweed@gmail.com) or her Doctoral Committee Chair, Dr. Yoshie Nakamura, [yoshienakamura@email.gwu.edu](mailto:yoshienakamura@email.gwu.edu).

This research is being overseen by an Institutional Review Board (“IRB”). You may talk to them at 202-994-2715 or via email at [ohrrib@gwu.edu](mailto:ohrrib@gwu.edu) if:

- You have questions, concerns, or complaints that are not being answered by the research team or if you wish to talk to someone independent of the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.

## **Appendix E: Statement of Non-Consent**

### ***Statement of Non-Consent***

*Thank you for considering our invitation to participate in the Q methodology study on leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic.*

*We understand that schedules can be demanding, and while you weren't able to participate this time, we deeply appreciate your willingness to review the invitation. Your expertise and perspective as a leader in your field are highly valued, and we hope to have the opportunity to engage with you in future initiatives.*

*If there are other ways we can collaborate or if you'd like to learn more about the findings from this study, please don't hesitate to email Erika Weed, erikaweed@gmail.com. I would be delighted to stay connected.*

*Thank you once again for your time and consideration.*

*Warm regards,  
Erika Weed*

## Appendix F: Pre-Sort Demographic Questions

1. Age
  - 18-24
  - 25-34
  - 35-44
  - 45-54
  - 55-64
  - 65 and above
2. Gender
  - Male
  - Female
  - Non-binary
  - Prefer not to say
3. Education Level
  - High school or equivalent
  - Some college
  - Bachelor's Degree
  - Master's Degree
  - Doctoral Degree
  - Other
4. Years of Leadership Experience
  - Less than 1 year
  - 1-5 years
  - 6-10 years
  - 11-15 years
  - 16-20 years
  - More than 20 years
5. Industry
  - Education
  - Healthcare
  - Technology
  - Finance and Banking
  - Manufacturing
  - Retail
  - Government
  - Not-for-Profit
  - Other
6. Current Leadership Role
  - Team Leader
  - Manager
  - Director
  - Vice President
  - Executive (C-suite)
  - Other
7. Number of direct reports:
  - 8. Organization Size

- 1-10 employees
- 11-50 employees
- 51-200 employees
- 201-500 employees
- 501-1000 employees
- More than 1000 employees

## **Appendix G: Post-Sort Questions**

- What makes these characteristics so ineffective?
- What makes these characteristics so effective?

## Appendix H: Post-Sort Interview Questions

### Introduction

Thank you for participating in this interview. We aim to explore the leadership characteristics you prioritize during times of chaotic change and the reasons behind those choices. Your insights will contribute to a deeper understanding of effective leadership in challenging environments.

### Demographic Information

1. Title:
2. Years in Leadership:

### Interview Questions

1. Leadership Characteristics
  - What leadership characteristics do you think are most critical during chaotic change? Why?
2. Changing Leadership Approaches
  - Have you adapted your leadership approach in response to the COVID-19 pandemic? If so, how?
3. Emotional Intelligence
  - How important is emotional intelligence in your leadership during chaotic change?
4. Vision and Direction
  - How do you maintain a clear vision and direction for your team during uncertainty?
  - What strategies do you implement to keep the team aligned with this vision?
5. Feedback and Learning
  - How do you incorporate feedback from your team during chaotic situations?
  - What role does learning from these experiences play in your leadership?
6. Looking Ahead
  - Based on your experiences, what leadership characteristics do you believe will be essential for future chaotic changes?
  - How are you preparing to develop or enhance these characteristics in yourself and your team?

### Conclusion

Thank you for sharing your insights today. Your perspectives on leadership during chaotic change will greatly benefit our understanding of effective leadership practices.

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