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DRAWING ON THE DARK TRIAD TO TEACH EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP IS DANGEROUS, IRRESPONSIBLE, AND BAD THEORY

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The proposition that the dark triad (DT) personality traits, comprising a callous "constellation" of Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy, are beneficial for leaders has gained traction. While supported by certain scholars and practitioners, this perspective represents bad management theory that undermines good management practice. Although some research has suggested potential benefits of DT traits in leaders, it is a mistake to assume that the traits are inherently functional. A common error underlying this viewpoint is the assumption that if a number of successful and celebrated leaders exhibit DT behaviors in their leadership, then other managers *must* adopt similar behaviors to be effective and successful. In this essay, we propose a teaching–learning agenda aimed at identifying and screening dark traits, reducing DT behaviors in future leaders, and dealing with DT leaders. Just as good educators combat toxic management behaviors that hinder sustainability, we should also counteract toxic management behaviors that negatively affect employees, organizations, and even society. Despite the apparent correlation with stereotypes of successful leaders, DT traits in leadership are a destructive force, and it is important to teach students and practitioners how to counteract them.

Theorizing about the universe or subatomic particles does not change their behaviors. By contrast, theorizing and teaching about human behavior in society and organizations can have an effect on how people behave and relate to each other, not least in terms of institutionally habituated forms of "self-fulfilling prophecy" (Ghoshal & Moran, 2005). In this journal, Ghoshal (2005: 77) called attention to this phenomenon by warning how bad management "theories"[1] destroy good[2] management practices: "a management

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[1] By "theory," Ghoshal (2005) was referring not to a "theory" from a classical scientific or academic point of view but rather to a kind of "implicit theory" of management or leadership—that is, a set of assumptions about the nature of individuals and corporations, and the corresponding beliefs about what characteristics or behaviors managers or leaders *should* exhibit.

[2] A reviewer noted that bad versus good is a somewhat crude and simplistic label for such complex issues. We agree. We use the terms as a catch-all idea, in line with previous work (Ghoshal, 2005; Kellerman, 2004). For Kellerman (2004), bad referred in general terms to ineffective and unethical practices—ideas we build on in this paper. We invite our readers to be aware of the limitations of these labels.

theory—if it gains sufficient currency—changes the behaviors of managers who start acting in accordance with the theory." According to Ghoshal (2005: 77), that is "precisely what has happened to management practice over the last several decades, converting our collective pessimism about managers into realized pathologies in management behaviors."

Managers, consultants, and scholars, in their search for "greater efficiency, speed, and thoroughness" (Porter, 1996: 70), as well as for leaders' success, risk making their world a worse rather than a better place. They contribute to fostering "an infernal cycle, a profoundly coercive system (…) reinforcing the rise of 'asshole management'; (…) [they all are] collaborating to make both work and leadership, although materially rewarding, a crippling and inhuman experience" (Ghoshal & Moran, 2005: 11). Noel Tichy, an influential academic, and Stratford Sherman, a consultant and executive coach, once stated: "Jack Welch [CEO of GE from 1981 to 2001] is the best CEO GE has ever had. Jack Welch is an asshole" (Tichy & Sherman, 1995: 17). Based on such a "pessimistic diagnosis," Ghoshal and Moran (2005: 4–5) argued that "managers absolutely need a new theory" that supports not only executing the economic dimension of management but also creating "a moral foundation for the profession which the amoral presumptions of current theory have destroyed."

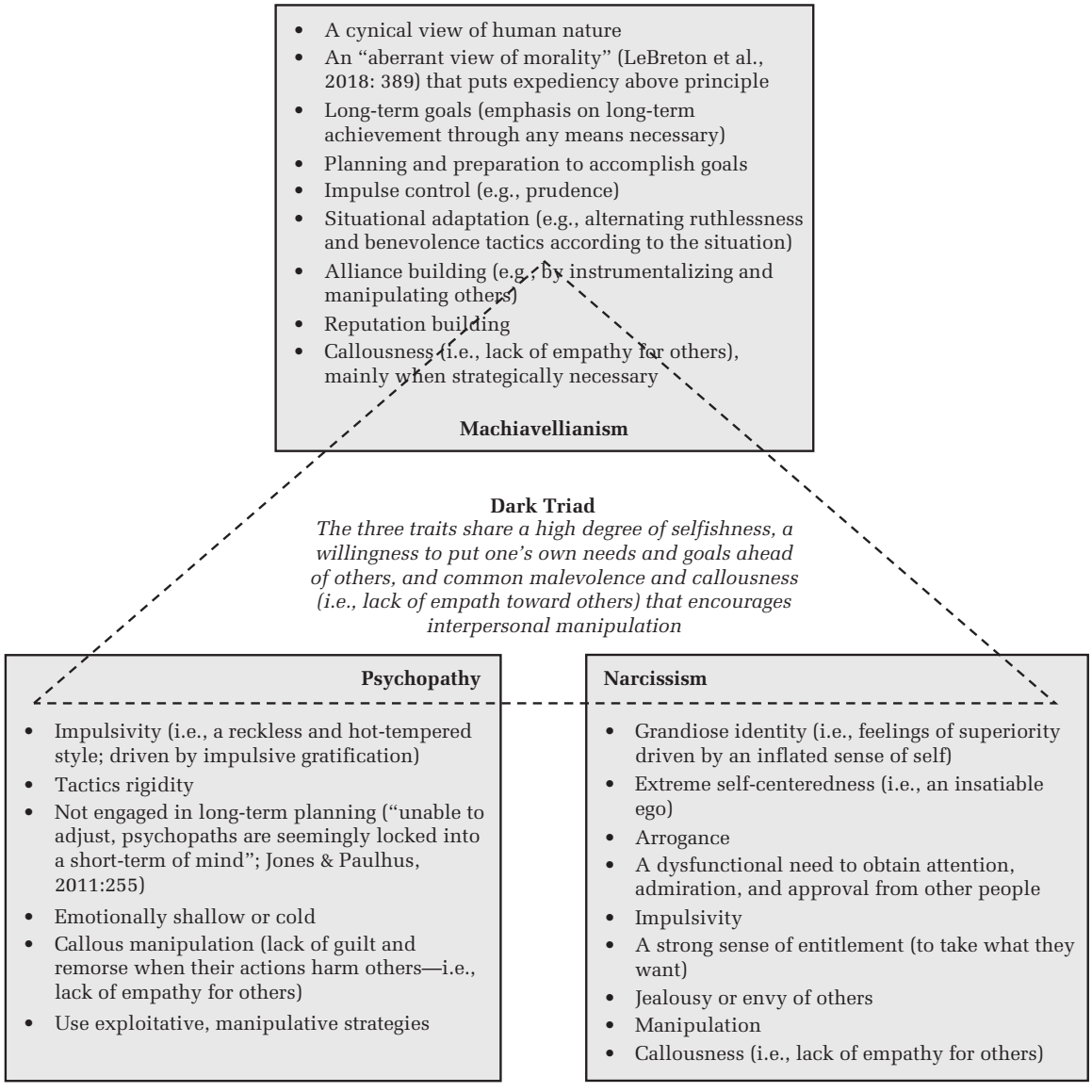
Almost two decades later, we continue to desperately need such a "new theory." A significant number of leaders, still "inebriated" by Jack Welch's "doctrine" (Welch & Welch, 2005), try to moralize brutality and cruelty (Welch stated: "Some think it's cruel or brutal to remove the bottom 10 per cent of our people. It isn't. It's just the opposite"; as cited in Welch & Byrne, 2001: 161). Other executives hide their self-centered and greedy goals behind manipulating narratives aiming at "governance of the employee's soul" (Willmott, 1993: 517). As executive compensation has risen exponentially (supported in self-serving questionable "moral" principles of justice; Magnan & Martin, 2019) to nourish executives' narcissistic egos (O'Reilly, Doerr, Caldwell, & Chatman, 2014), we have witnessed a massive deterioration in compensation, job security, and working conditions for many workers (Learmonth & Morrell, 2021). The Welch doctrine has been stated as "a virus" that damaged the sustainability not only of GE but also of Boeing and other once-respected companies (Gelles, 2022: 73).

Unfortunately, while brutal and cruel management "is not inevitable" (Ghoshal & Moran, 2005: 10), and "there is a long list of winners who have succeeded *without* treating people like dirt" (Sutton, 2017: 7), the Welch "doctrine" continues to be proclaimed by both practitioners and influential scholars as legitimate and even necessary. Consequently, as Greenbaum, Quade, and Bonner (2015: 33) observed, "leaders may decide to practice amoral management out of concern that being an ethical leader will result in fewer opportunities for career stability and advancement." Recent, and by no means isolated, work by influential scholar Jeffrey Pfeffer (2021), epitomized how dangerous such a "virus" is, and heightened Ghoshal's concerns about (bad) management theories. In a socially and ethically problematic provocation, Pfeffer (2021) proposed that the dark triad (DT) of traits of Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy could have functional benefits for leaders.[3] Pfeffer's view, which has been shared by other scholars and practitioners, accords with our experiences as management educators and executive trainers that such views are common.

The defense of the DT is surprising and problematic from the firm's "moral contract" (Ghoshal, 2005; Ghoshal, Bartlett, & Moran, 1999; Ghoshal & Moran, 2005) and the organizational sustainability perspectives. It is "bad theory" in that it is based on "deeply unrealistic, pessimistic assumptions about the nature of individuals and corporations (…) that cause managers to undermine their own worth" (Ghoshal et al., 1999: 10). In modern "organizational economies" (Simon, 1991), the growth of firms and, therefore, the economy, is primarily dependent on the quality of their management. Management is not only key "for achieving corporate success"; it is also "the main force for economic and social progress" (Ghoshal & Moran, 2005: 4). In such a context, Ghoshal and colleagues (1999: 10) argued, the company's activity must be founded in "a new 'moral contract' with employees and society, replacing paternalistic exploitation and value appropriation with employability and value creation in a relationship of shared destiny." Such a "shared destiny" is incompatible with the defense of DT in leaders. Although "treating others like dirt and being selfish can (…) help people triumph in pure 'I win, you

[3] We acknowledge the use of the term "dark" in the nomenclature, which may have negative connotations. This terminology is commonly used in management, a body of knowledge that is, perhaps, sometimes insufficiently reflexive about the politics of color. If we were to abandon the term, however, this article could not be composed, given the many references to things being "dark" in the literature.

FIGURE 1
Differences and Commonalities between the Dark Triad Traits



Note: Figure developed from Jones & Paulhus, 2011, LeBreton et al., 2018, O'Boyle et al., 2012, and Paulhus, 2014.

lose' situations—where there is no incentive to cooperate with others now or in the future" (Sutton, 2017: 6), teams and organizations are social systems whose positive functioning requires information or knowledge sharing, trust, and cooperation. The DT comprises three socially aversive traits in the subclinical range (Paulhus & Williams, 2002): narcissism (i.e., grandiosity, egotism, and entitlement), Machiavellianism (i.e., cynicism, emotional coldness, and manipulativeness), and psychopathy (i.e., impulsivity, thrill-seeking, lack of remorse, and emotional shallowness). These components all share a common selfishness and callousness that foster interpersonal manipulation[4] (Figure 1). They are often associated with the seven deadly sins (Veselka, Giammarco, & Vernon, 2014) as well as

[4] See Book, Visser, and Volk (2015) for a discussion and the empirical test of five plausible theories that have been proposed to explain the "core" of the DT. Data validated the contributions of those five theories.

several aversive psychosocial outcomes (for a synthesis, see Kaufman, Yaden, Hyde, & Tsukayama, 2019). Considering meta-analytical evidence, O'Boyle, Forsyth, Banks, and McDaniel (2012: 557) argued that the three traits "are manifestations of an agentic but exploitative social strategy that motivates striving for personal goals but undermines the balance of social exchange essential to smooth organizational functioning."

Thus, the defense of "unprincipled leadership" by Pfeffer (2021) is both surprising and dangerous. The surprise is that Pfeffer (2016) wrote about the "assholes" winning in corporate life, whose success was achieved, quite literally, at the cost of others' lives. In *Dying for a Paycheck*, Pfeffer (2018) strongly attacked perverse forms of modern management that are harmful to both employees' health and company performance. Research has supported his argument (e.g., working for a toxic leader increases the risk of heart disease and premature death; Kivimäki et al., 2005). Academics have an ethical and moral responsibility for the theories they teach (Ghoshal, 2005; Ghoshal & Moran, 2005; Khurana, 2007); thus, they should validate practice that is not only beneficial and positive for leaders but also makes a positive contribution to the organization of businesses and wider society, which Pfeffer (2010) advocated elsewhere. In Pfeffer's own words: "We should care as much about people as we do about polar bears—or the environmental savings from using better milk jugs—and also understand the causes and consequences of how we focus our research and policy attention" (Pfeffer, 2010: 43).

The danger lies in the relationship between DT leadership and negative outcomes for teams and organizations (Palmer, Holmes, & Perrewé, 2020; see review in LeBreton et al., 2018), including fraudulent accounting (Mutschmann, Hasso, & Pelster, 2022) and other socially irresponsible corporate actions (Recendes, Misangyi, & Oh, 2022), which have facilitated numerous corporate scandals (Cannon, Vedel, & Jonason, 2020). Even if DT traits show some potential upsides for the individual leader in terms of organizational ascendence and perceived effectiveness (Judge, Piccolo, & Kosalka, 2009; Smith, Hill, Wallace, Recendes, & Judge, 2018) in the short term (Harrison, Summers, & Mennecke, 2018), "over time, these benefits probably will wear thin as others see the exploitive and harmful nature of DT individuals" (Palmer et al., 2020: 169). The fact that such traits *may* produce some "positive" outcomes does not render them inherently positive.[5] While some scholars and practitioners may have correctly acknowledged the potential benefits of the DT in leaders, at least in the short term, they have wrongly (at least implicitly) assumed that the DT is functional for employees' and organizations functioning. This is a common error: while successful and celebrated leaders who express dark leadership may lead others to believe that such behavior is effective and necessary for success, this thinking is flawed as it overlooks the risks and negative consequences associated with DT traits—for organizations and the leaders themselves (Hogan, Kaiser, Sherman, & Harms, 2021).

The cases of Elizabeth Holmes (Theranos), Andrew Fastow (Enron), and Carlos Ghosn (Nissan), among others, discussed below in the paper, are illustrative. Obviously, several leaders *personally* profited from their DT traits and behaviors—but at the expense of their organizations and even society. Richard Fuld, known as "the gorilla of Wall Street," who led the Lehman Brothers until its collapse, was paid about $500 million over the last eight years of the period he ran the bank (Farrell, 2018). Jimmy Cayne, who led Bear Stearns before it imploded, "became infamous for playing bridge and reportedly smoking marijuana rather than keeping an eye on the financial behemoth he ran" (Moynihan, 2021). On March 13, 2008, when the bank entered its final death spiral, Cayne was playing bridge again, having joined the board's conference call late so that he could finish the game first ("he was unreachable because he refused to carry a BlackBerry"; Partnoy, 2008: 13). In 2012, his estimated net worth was about $600 million (Ferguson, 2012). Despite their *personal* success, both men were considered by *Time* magazine to be among the 25 people most to blame for the financial crisis (Time, 2009; see also Neate, 2012).

Welch (nicknamed "Neutron Jack" for the brutal job cuts he instigated in the 1980s), once heralded as the greatest leader of his era and a visionary, is today more widely regarded as "the man who broke capitalism" (Gelles, 2022) who "crushed the soul of corporate America," contributing to GE's long-term decline. As Gelles (2022: 3) argued,

[5] As the fact that bright personality traits (e.g., forgiveness) *may* produce negative outcomes (e.g., the transgressor continues to offend the forgiver; see McNulty, 2019) does not transform those bright traits into dark ones.

> Welch was not, as he would have liked us to believe, a patrician steward of sound business management and good character (…) Rather, he was hungry for power and thirsty for money, an ideological revolutionary who focused on maximizing profits at the expense of all else.

Welch's influence was so pervasive that one former GE executive said, "If Jack jumped off a bridge, half the Fortune 500 would have been jumping off bridges" (as cited in Hill, 2022: 10). Robison (2021) attributed the form of management that Welch represented as contributing to the 737 MAX tragedy and the fall of Boeing. Deutschman (2005) illuminated these linkages in *Fast Company*, in conversation with criminal psychologist Robert Hare, who said that "if I wasn't studying psychopaths in prison, I'd do it at the stock exchange":

> We're worshipful of top executives who seem charismatic, visionary, and tough. So long as they're lifting profits and stock prices, we're willing to overlook that they can also be callous, conning, manipulative, deceitful, verbally and psychologically abusive, remorseless, exploitative, self-delusional, irresponsible, and megalomaniacal. So, we collude in the elevation of leaders who are sadly insensitive to hurting others and society at large.

In short, educators cannot close their eyes, as Pfeffer and others have seemed to do, to the disastrous consequences of DT leaders for their companies, employees, and other stakeholders. It is therefore necessary to decouple a leader's personal success and celebrity from (sustainable) organizational success. That is the crux of the matter: if DT leaders are endorsed as normal by those on whom they impinge, then evil assumes a veneer of legitimacy that enables its abuse and irresponsibility further, under the guise of everyday organizing, of normalcy (Clegg, Cunha, Munro, Rego, & de Sousa, 2016). Promoting psychopathic traits as the essence of good leadership and management is wrong. DT leaders are toxic and destructive. Note, however, that destructive *leadership* goes beyond DT *leaders*—it encompasses a "toxic triangle" involving destructive *leaders*, susceptible *followers*, and conducive *environments* (Padilla, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2007; Schyns, Gauglitz, Wisse, & Schütz, 2022). The destructive leadership of Neutron Jack was fueled by those who were motivated to "jump off bridges" with him, as well as by a worshipful economic, business, academic, and media context. This is a crucial assumption to consider when teaching and learning about DT leaders. While blaming DT leaders for "all the evil" is cognitively "cost-effective" and helps "complicit" followers and other stakeholders to clear their own conscience (Bazerman, 2022), taking such a stance does not contribute to eradicating destructive leadership.

Therefore, teaching and learning agendas should address the interplay between the leader's DT traits, the leader's followers, and the economic, social, and cultural context, and explore what followers and organizations can do to counter them. Students and practitioners should be taught not to be beguiled by dark personalities. One of our reviewers observed that we know "very little about how to teach and train managers to cope with these toxic personalities"; hence, we ask: *How can management educators increase immunity to DT leadership?* To explore this, we start by conceptualizing DT and then situating it in relation to leadership and its outcomes, to make clear why these traits are undesirable. We then discuss the role of power in the process of dark leadership. These sections are followed by a teaching–learning agenda. Andrew Jack (2023: 14) wrote in the *Financial Times* that one main reason why so few management research findings penetrate the organizational world is that academics "receive scant credit for writing in 'bridging publications' aimed at people in business." He concluded that, "Ultimately, academics' greatest influence may come less through research than teaching to students and executives, the vast majority of whom then move into or return to business." The current paper contributes to responding to that call.

THE DARK TRIAD AND "EFFECTIVE" LEADERSHIP

The DT's "callous constellation" (Paulhus, 2014: 424) of "subclinical"[6] personality traits of Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy (elaborated below) explicate *evil*, in that "all three entail a socially malevolent character with behavior tendencies toward self-promotion, emotional coldness, duplicity, and aggressiveness" (Paulhus & Williams, 2002: 557). Despite their uniqueness (Rauthmann & Kolar, 2012), the three traits overlap both conceptually and empirically, with meta-analytic evidence suggesting that their relationship with work behaviors is relatively similar (O'Boyle et al., 2012; Paulhus, 2014). In the interpersonal circumplex, all fall into the high-agency and low-communion quadrant—that is,

[6] Evidence does not support that dark personalities are clinically disturbed. As Paulhus (2014: 423) argued, while they can be aggressive and duplicitous, unless one uses social malevolence as a criterion these traits "should not be considered inherently psychopathological."

agentic striving at the expense of communal welfare (Jones & Paulhus, 2011). Individuals with this profile are highly indifferent to the harm they cause to others through their arrogance, callousness, and manipulation. For those reasons, some researchers have argued that within the normal range of personality, the three constructs are indistinguishable; they also share a common callousness that encourages interpersonal manipulation (Jones & Paulhus, 2011, 2014; O'Boyle et al., 2012; Paulhus, 2014). Empirical evidence by Bertl, Pietschnig, Tran, Stieger, and Voracek (2017) suggests that aversive personalities may be best represented by a unified "dark core" rather than a DT. In this paper, when we refer to DT leaders, we mean those who exhibit high levels of *narcissistic*, *Machiavellian,* and *psychopathic* traits. Or, to put it in another way: they demonstrate dark characteristics *frequently*, in a *wide range* of situations, and toward *more* people that they see as having instrumental value for their own interests and goals (Rotolo & Bracken, 2022).

Narcissism

Some components of narcissism, such as a strong sense of self-worth or self-esteem, accompanied by a sense of efficacy, may be functional, which explains why some literature has stressed positive outcomes of this trait (e.g., narcissistic CEOs may help firms to overcome inertia by facilitating the adoption of technological discontinuities; Gerstner, König, Enders, & Hambrick, 2013). However, meta-analytical evidence (Grijalva, Harms, Newman, Gaddis, & Fraley, 2015) has shown that while narcissism is associated with leader emergence, it does not relate significantly to leader effectiveness. A synthesis of studies (Palmer et al., 2020) showed that (a) CEO narcissism affected the riskiness of banks' policies prior to the banking collapse in 2008, with banks led by narcissistic CEOs prior to the collapse experiencing a slower post-collapse recovery; (b) companies headed by narcissistic CEOs are more likely to be involved in litigation, with lawsuits taking more time to resolve; and (c) narcissistic CEOs are more likely to engage in egoistic acquisitions (Aabo, Als, Thomsen, & Wulff, 2020), undertake unethical conduct, and engage in financial misreporting and fraud.

Narcissistic leaders tend to be charismatically unorthodox, selfish, and self-absorbed; unwilling to listen and oversensitive to criticism deflating their sense of self; and feel exaggeratedly entitled, instrumentalizing others in pursuit of personal ambitions. They are more likely to develop hubris (Sadler-Smith, 2018) and diminish followers' self-concept (Nevicka, De Hoogh, Den Hartog, & Belschak, 2018). Their tendency toward self-promotion, lack of interest in feedback from others, and tendency to belittle and exploit subordinates are detrimental for followers and organizational performance (O'Boyle et al., 2012; Palmer et al., 2020). While narcissists are often appealing and persuasive, these impressions do not stand the test of time; narcissists become increasingly disliked with continued interactions (Paulhus, 2014). They become less popular, over time, being viewed as less effective leaders (Leckelt, Küfner, Nestler, & Back, 2015; Nevicka et al., 2018). As Palmer et al. (2020) observed, while, in the short term, narcissistic CEOs can be seen as charming, competent, and charismatic, over time displays of entitlement and hubris have negative consequences for top management team operations, not only within the team but also in interacting with subordinates (see also Smith et al., 2018). As Kets de Vries, Florent-Treacy, and Korotov (2016: 70) observed, although "it can be a key ingredient for success, narcissism can also become a toxic drug." In short, while the "self-confident and agentic aura" that narcissism projects may lead followers to develop a "romance of leadership" (Bligh, Kohles, & Pillai, 2011), the "romance" may be short-lived because the "idyllic" view of the leader does not stand the test of time and the facts.

Machiavellianism

In "dark niches" (Paulhus, 2014; see also Jonason, Wee, Li, & Jackson, 2014), as well as in arenas in which "power steering" (Buchanan & Badham, 2020) is essential, acting with candor may be dangerous. Moreover, because all organizations are political in their design of relations between members, Machiavellianism may be advantageous for a leader. However, as O'Boyle et al. (2012: 558) observed, while "Machiavellians are relatively successful in their careers, particularly when they work in unstructured, less organized settings," their success tends to decrease as organizational structure increases and channels circuits of power (Clegg, 2023) more formally in the organization. Time also matters. For some time, Machiavellian leaders may be persuasive and perceived as committed team players that care for their team and organization (Palmer et al., 2020). However, over time, they are more likely to pit team members against each other, to adopt an authoritarian and micromanagement style, and to carry out manipulative and intimidating behaviors that harm

team cohesion, cooperation, and trust (Brownell, McMullen, & O'Boyle, 2021; Palmer, Wang, Molina-Sieiro, & Holmes, 2022; Smith et al., 2018).

Therefore, Machiavellian leaders' success may be short-lived. Their lies and manipulations, when uncovered, produce organizational cynicism and distrust. Exploitive tendencies can flourish only up to a point (Jones & Paulhus, 2011). As the adage "Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me" suggests, followers are sensitive to any indication of inequity in the leader–member exchange (LMX) process and take steps to detect and protect themselves against the intrigues of a Machiavellian leader. A decline in followers' job performance is often a sign of recognition (O'Boyle et al., 2012). Leaders' Machiavellianism is negatively related to subordinates' career satisfaction and positively associated with their emotional exhaustion (Volmer, Koch, & Göritz, 2016) and perceptions of abusive supervision (Kiazad, Restubog, Zagenczyk, Kiewitz, & Tang, 2010). These and other perverse consequences of a leader's Machiavellianism explain why leaders' entrepreneurial intentions relate negatively to entrepreneurial performance (Brownell et al., 2021).

Negotiation is another domain in which the short-term versus long-term benefits brought by Machiavellian leaders are at stake. Recendes, Aime, Hill, and Petrenko (2022) found that, in negotiations, Machiavellian CEOs reduce acquisition costs, creating net savings in production and debt financing. However, while they may maximize zero-sum gains, they are unable to optimize integrative bargaining outcomes (ten Brinke, Black, Porter, & Carney, 2015). Benefits are outweighed; it is because Machiavellians do not believe that integrative outcomes are easily achieved that they tend to eschew collaborative strategies in favor of distributive ones (Amanatullah, Morris, & Curhan, 2008). Machiavellianism may be effective in one-shot negotiations but not those that are repeated. The targets of Machiavellianism learn from the Machiavellians' performativity in further negotiations (Ingerson, DeTienne, Hooley, & Black, 2020), thus refraining from cooperating in search of integrative solutions, and even retaliating against Machiavellian negotiators.

Psychopathy

Meta-analytical evidence suggests that psychopathy has a positive relationship with leadership emergence but a negative relationship with leadership effectiveness (Landay, Harms, & Credé, 2019). A possible explanation for this is that psychopathic leaders excel at power plays and may be very seductive in "their ability to use smoke and mirrors to create the appearance of success" (Kets de Vries & Rook, 2019: 217). However, their callous and impulsive behavior can make them terrifying and strongly manipulative. They may prosper in settings that require bold risks and a detached, rational demeanor (Babiak & Hare, 2006; O'Boyle et al., 2012). While they may seem like effective leaders in the short term, over time their behavior becomes abusive, with negative consequences for team cohesion, trust, information and knowledge sharing, cooperation, and performance (Palmer et al., 2020). Success as a leader does not equate to success as a follower or organization.

Psychopaths do not respect norms of reciprocity, and they create toxic workplaces, alienate peers and followers, and destroy trust in interpersonal relationships. Consequently, they damage employees' well-being and motivation, and increase followers' cynicism, turnover, work withdrawal—producing self-protective and counterproductive behaviors that damage followers' and organizational performance (Babiak & Hare, 2006; Boddy, 2014, 2017; Brownell et al., 2021; Mathieu & Babiak, 2015, 2016). They tend to create "puppets" rather than independent thinkers. While agendas may be well-served in the short run, inhibiting the freedoms of others limits the range of thinking, acting, and being, creating a lack of psychological safety that institutionalizes cultures of conformity in which leadership errors of judgment accumulate. A lack of psychological safety inhibits participation and speaking-up behaviors, ultimately often leading to fraud and organizational wrongdoing because it is wiser to cheat than to confront a leader with reality—as happened at Volkswagen in the well-known Dieselgate scandal (Gaim, Clegg, & Cunha, 2021); at Theranos (Carreyrou, 2019); and at Boeing (Robison, 2021). A major causal role in the global financial crisis was played by psychopaths working in financial corporations (Boddy, 2011).

Paulhus (2014: 423) has noted that while psychopaths "may flourish in the right cultural context—for example, in street gangs," normal organizations are not street gangs. Outside of such "dark niches," serious negative consequences are likely. The motto of Al Dunlap—one notorious psychopathic leader, nicknamed "Chainsaw" and "Rambo in pinstripes"—was "If you want a friend, get a dog. I'm taking no chance, I've got two" (Paulhus, 2014: 423). He was hired as CEO of Sunbeam to save the company because of his notorious cost-cutting and head-count-slashing style (Wall Street had applauded him for having fired 11,000 workers at Scott Paper; see Deutschman,

2005). In the end, he ruined the company by destroying its social capital (Kellerman, 2004). In short, psychopathic leaders may create unnecessary suffering in other people, be a source of toxicity, and destroy organizations.

The Three Traits Operating in Concert

The three DT trait characteristics share in common a tendency toward manipulative behavior rooted in selfishness and callousness (see Figure 1). Accordingly, Paulhus and Williams (2002) coined the term "dark triad" to encourage researchers to study the three traits in tandem. Such an approach considers that the three traits "rarely occur in isolation" (Rauthmann & Kolar, 2013: 584). While each trait, separately, in certain circumstances, and in the short-term, may produce positive outcomes (Smith et al., 2018; Volmer et al., 2016), its impact may be particularly perverse when combined with the other two traits (Harrison et al., 2018; Paulhus, 2014). Being narcissistic without having psychopathic or Machiavellian traits may be less perverse than being strong in all three traits. Harrison et al. (2018: 53) stated that these three traits operate in concert as powerful psychological antecedents to fraudulent behavior:

> Narcissism motivates individuals to act unethically for their personal benefit and changes their perceptions of their abilities to successfully commit fraud. Machiavellianism motivates individuals not only to act unethically, but also alters perceptions about the opportunities that exist to deceive others. Psychopathy has a prominent effect on how individuals rationalize their fraudulent behaviors. Accordingly, we find that the dark triad elements act in concert as powerful psychological antecedents to fraud behaviors.

Empirical evidence supports such an "operation in concert" hypothesis. Mutschmann et al. (2022) found that all three subscales of the DT load on the same factor and are positively associated with accounting manipulation. These authors suggested that "one potential explanation is that advancing (…) as a dark leader requires the person to display characteristics of all three traits" because, for example, being narcissistic without having psychopathic or Machiavellian traits "may make it difficult for a dark leader to progress in an organization" (Mutschmann et al., 2022: 781). Other studies (e.g., Guillén, Jacquart, & Hogg, 2023; Soral, Pati, & Kakani, 2022) that have investigated the common underlying core of DT traits have also supported considering DT in leaders as a core construct.

An Unrealistic Pragmatism

Defending the DT as a pragmatic path to effective leadership, equated with the conquest and maintenance of power (Pfeffer, 2022), is a potentially dangerous legitimation of wrongdoing, as well as an ethically questionable idea (Tourish, 2020). It is also "bad theory" in that it is incompatible with the firm's "moral contract" necessary to support cooperative relationships in the pursuit of a "shared destiny" (Ghoshal, 2005; Ghoshal et al., 1999; Ghoshal & Moran, 2005). While being "obsessed (…) with the 'real word', such a theory does not mirror the "real 'real world'" (Ghoshal et al., 1999: 10). As has been written elsewhere, corporate leadership should be assessed from a company's long-term and social sustainability interests (Pfeffer, 2010, 2017, 2018). On this criterion, several top managers once idolized by the media and business schools have subsequently been stigmatized as organizational gravediggers (Petit & Bollaert, 2012; Sadler-Smith, 2018).

Shortly after being named CFO of the Year, Andrew Fastow, former CFO of Enron, was indicted on 78 counts for his involvement in the company's debacle, including fraud, money laundering, and conspiracy (Sheppard & Hume, 2015). John Baxter, Enron's former vice-chairman, died by suicide, his friends saying that "he was depressed by the prospect of testifying about the role he and his colleagues played in the biggest bankruptcy in corporate history" (Teather, 2002). The irony is that Baxter had been among the very few executives who had raised objections within the company about fraudulent accounting practices (Boje, Roslie, Durant, & Luhman, 2004)—a demonstration of how "dark organizations" may be like "black holes" that suck in all that comes close. Elizabeth Holmes, the founder of Theranos, was named by Forbes as the world's youngest self-made female billionaire in 2014; just two years later, in June 2016, that magazine revised her net worth to $0 ("Profile: Elizabeth Holmes," 2023). In 2022, she was found guilty of several charges of fraud and sentenced to more than 11 years in prison (Masters, 2022). Carreyrou (as cited in Bilton, 2018) described her as someone who "got used to telling lies so often, and the lies got so much bigger, that eventually the line between the lies and reality blurred for her." Carreyrou (as cited in Bilton, 2018) also observed that "she has shown zero sign of feeling bad, or expressing sorrow, or admitting wrongdoing, or saying sorry to the patients whose lives she endangered."

These illustrations (like others discussed here) raise important questions not only regarding the

consequences of DT leaders *per se* but also regarding the interaction of traits and contexts, roles and positions within an organizations' power circuitry, and the behavioral implications that arise from such interactions. Those leaders did not operate alone—rather, they were actively or passively supported by *susceptible followers*, and they were celebrated as heroes within a *conducive environment* rooted in "bad theories." They wielded power under an incorrect, unrealistic premise about leading organizations operating in modern "organizational economies" (Simon, 1991). In such a context, being able to manage a "shared destiny" (Ghoshal et al., 1999) is incompatible with seeing and exercising power as *dominance over others*. Pfeffer, as well as other scholars and practitioners, have seen value in DT as an effective path to power, illustrated by the following rhetorical question and answer: "What happens when you put a python and a chicken in a cage together?" … "The python eats the chicken" (a classroom metaphor used by Pfeffer as cited in Useem [2015: 6]). However, such a perspective about power is flawed within the moral contract discussed above.

POWER AS A RELATIONAL PHENOMENON

The seven rules of power articulated by Pfeffer (2022: xiv–xv) and praised in business media epitomize a domination view of power: the "the python eating the chicken." These rules are: "(1) Get out of your own way, (2) Break the rules, (3) Appear powerful, (4) Build a powerful brand, (5) Network relentlessly, (6) Use your power, and (7) Success excuses almost everything you may have done to acquire power" (Pfeffer, 2022: xiv–xv). Pfeffer (2022: xv) emphasized the importance of the seventh rule, stating, "I believe the seventh rule to be one of the more important, as it causes people to act rather than worry needlessly about consequences." Pfeffer (2022: xv) further stated that "[Donald] Trump surely follows the seven rules of power I outline in this book," describing the Trumpian mentality as "You tell me what I need to do to win, and I'll do it. I will say anything, I will do anything. The question is: are you willing to do what it takes?"

Echoes of a classic intuitive definition of power by Robert Dahl (1957: 202–203) resonate through this definition: "A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do." This is the Nietzschean "fatal attraction" (Brownell et al., 2021) of DT leaders: their pursuit of *dominance over others* and the will to remove power from others and to be unconstrained by others. The consequences of this perspective have been well-elaborated in the power literature (Clegg, 2023; Haugaard, 2020; Lukes, 2005). The emphasis is on power as a freedom for the self to exercise a prohibition over others. Such a view has been regarded as unduly restricted in contemporary analysis (Clegg, 2023; Haugaard, 2022). Power can be seen as more than power over others; it may be power shared *with* others, or it may be power that *empowers* others. Power that is inspiring, that steers others to positive achievements requires *using power productively* to create better futures and the "shared destiny" mentioned above. What we need are conceptions of power being exercised in a responsible way, through incorporating in decision-making processes the claims, interests, and values of a plurality of stakeholders, with the dual purpose of pursuing long-positive development for the common good (Rego, Cunha, & Clegg, 2022).

A fundamental flaw with the functionality of the DT lies in the way it sees power as a personal quality that certain leaders possess to use as they see appropriate. Power is not a possession; it is only the hubris of office that can make it seem so because, fundamentally, power is relational. In power struggles, winners can impose their views on others and remove power from them only for so long as their position within nodal points of extant circuits of power prevails (Clegg, 2023). Power is relational, an attribute of networks of relations in the flows through circuits of power connecting actors and other actants (Clegg, 2023; Clegg, Courpasson, & Phillips, 2006). To see power as a possession that an individual has over others is to regard power in what Lukes (2005) termed a "one-dimensional" view. Such a perspective explores power only as a constraint on others' freedoms. Given certain rules of the game, the callous and manipulative behaviors of DT leaders occupying such nodes are part of reality affecting human behavior (Liberman, Samuels, & Ross, 2004). Such uses of power are associated with behavioral disinhibition, self-interested and unethical conduct, as well as a relentless striving to assert social dominance (Cho & Keltner, 2020; Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003; Guinote, 2017), which are manifestations of powerful "dark traits."

Power may be exercised through coordinated, collaborative, collective *power to* make future states of affairs happen that depend on positive goal consensus, freely arrived at (Clegg et al., 2023; Pansardi, 2012; Parsons, 1963). Consensus on goals may be commanded by the power of office, but achieving it depends on consent. Aspiring to and creating futures

for which there is a common consensus implies a deliberate consideration of a diversity of views. Clearly, this account of power to achieve things entails sharing *power with* others, rather than exercising it *over* others, as noted by Follett (Follett, 1924, 1998; see also Boje & Rosile, 2001). This *socialized* version of power (i.e., power for the benefit of others; McClelland & Burnham, 2003) is at odds with the approach of DT leaders: sharing power is not something they will do willingly, unless they see some benefit and thus *share* as a means to manipulation and exploitation.

The interpretation of leadership effectiveness depends on the lens through which the world is seen. Viewed pragmatically, through a focus on the benefits that power brings to the powerholder, what matters is the capacity to gain and conserve *power over* others and *remove power from* others to achieve *emancipation from them* (Brownell et al., 2021). As we broaden the view of *power over* to consider *power to* and *power with*, we move away from a view of *individualized* power as something possessed by a leader and wielded over others. Yuan, Chia, and Gosling (2023) regarded leadership as not only conquering and maintaining power but also doing something productively with it, for oneself and allies as well as for others, exercising *power to* and *power with* others to make a positive difference (Berti, Simpson, Cunha, & Clegg, 2021; Cunha, Rego, Simpson, & Clegg, 2020). As Hogan and Sherman (2022: 23) argued, "leadership is a resource for a group and not a source of privilege for incumbent leaders." Employees are less likely to agree that individualized power-led effectiveness serves both collective ethical interests and the corporate sustainability goals that Pfeffer (2010), in another voice, advocated.

Effective power *over* others, as Weber (1978) recognized, requires legitimacy to be stable authority. Exercising power over others through terror can be episodically effective but is structurally weak. The costs of power are high, where trust and consent are low. Exercising *power over* others, without restraints, may prove to be perverse: both the leaders and the organization may fail as the costs of maintaining a hubris of power and its control take their toll. Personal aggrandizement on the part of a leader may be achieved at the expense of organizational or societal well-being (Kellerman, 2004), subjecting organizations to undue legal risks (O'Reilly, Doerr, & Chatman, 2018), endangering organizations and national institutions (O'Reilly & Chatman, 2020). As such, the consequences of power *over* gained through the toxic triad are far from neutral. There are reasons to be concerned with *how* leaders exercise *what* power in relation to virtues and ethics. Exercising power ineffectively is also obviously problematic, in that without access to power relations, making a positive difference for the future and building a "shared destiny" is impossible (Simpson & Berti, 2020; Simpson, Rego, Berti, Clegg, & Cunha, 2022); however, positive outcomes are more likely to flow from democratic circuits of power than those valorized for their autocracy.

IMPLICATIONS FOR APPLIED MANAGEMENT LEARNING AND EDUCATION

In the sections that follow, we explore a teaching–learning agenda based on the following thesis: the DT is best taught as a dangerous proposition, with the DT at its worst when uncontrolled by countervailing management practices and governance mechanisms. After discussing how to make students aware of such a danger in organizations, we will discuss three "defenses" against DT leaders. While the first defense *aims at* screening and ruling out DT candidates, such an endeavor is made difficult by the capacity of DT candidates to persuade and manipulate recruiters. It is therefore crucial to build a second defense—by implementing control or governance and transparency-oriented mechanisms and fostering a culture of voice and psychological safety that work as antidotes against the darkest manifestations of DT leaders. The third defense is more reactive: dealing with a DT leader when the previous two defenses are not effective. Discussing this third defense makes students aware of the challenges and difficulties that leaders in middle- or low-level positions, or "leaders-to-be," may experience when dealing with DT leaders.

Before proceeding, three clarifying notes are necessary. First, most of the examples we provide are of managers at the top of their organizations. We use top-level examples for two main reasons. On one hand, top managers have significant influence in their organizations, not just through their own decisions and the ways they allocate resources but also through social learning or role modeling (e.g., Treviño, 2004), social information processing (Kim, Lee, Gao, & Johnson, 2021), and the "falling dominoes effect" (Bass, Waldman, Avolio, & Bebb, 1987) or the "cascading effect" (Liu, Liao, & Loi, 2012; Palmer et al., 2020). Protecting against DT in top-level positions makes the organization less likely to

select DT leaders for low- and middle-level positions. Defending against top- versus low- and middle-level managers is therefore more effective. On the other hand, many top managers are in the public domain, which makes them more effective in terms of communication with a student audience. They are also more scrutinized by scholars, business reporters or journalists, and the media. For example, evidence about Elizabeth Holmes and Theranos may be found in *Organization Studies* (Tourish & Willmott, 2023), *Business Horizons* (Straker, Peel, Nusem, & Wrigley, 2021), and a book by John Carreyrou (2019), a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter. Note, however, that while DT traits are more dangerous and impactful when they are present in top leaders, DT traits are toxic at any level.

Second, our proposal may be more suitable for higher levels of education, such as MBA and postgraduate students, given their potential role as agents of change. However, there is also a potential "virtuous" use of this teaching–learning agenda for undergraduate students, whose internal moral identity is likely less developed (Krettenauer, 2020; Krettenauer & Victor, 2017) and thus more likely to be affected by teaching and learning activities (Gu & Neesham, 2014).

Third, expanding on a point made earlier, it is important to emphasize that destructive *leadership* extends beyond isolated DT *leaders.* As highlighted by Padilla et al. (2007) and Schyns et al. (2022), it encompasses a toxic triangle involving destructive *leaders*, susceptible *followers*, and conducive *environments* (see also Thoroughgood, Sawyer, Padilla, & Lunsford, 2018). This broader perspective bears two significant and interrelated implications for applied management learning and education. First, it enlightens students by safeguarding them against the harmful effects of DT leaders. Second, it contributes to making students more aware that they themselves, as followers, must avoid playing a (toxic) role in nurturing or supporting destructive leaders, either passively or more actively. This awareness also enables them to identify situations and contexts in which they are more susceptible to adopting such a role. Consequently, they will better understand why and when it is necessary to summon the courage to oppose not only destructive leaders but also supportive or passive followers, including peers and coworkers. Such a stance may entail social and emotional challenges, in that it may lead to social pressures to conform to the destructive leader, provoke conflicting feelings and goals (e.g., "being loyal to the leader or organization" versus "defending the law or ethical values and principles"), and even result in social isolation.

THE DARK TRIAD IN THE CLASSROOM: A TEACHING–LEARNING AGENDA

We advance four primary pathways (synthesized in Table 1) to enhance immunity to, or capacity to deal with, DT leadership through management education. After discussing how to increase management students' awareness of the dangers associated with DT, we delve into two main "line[s] of defense" against DT leaders (Babiak & Hare, 2006: 209): (a) candidate screening, and (b) designing organizational structures and processes to neutralize, or at least mitigate, the potentially devastating effects of DT leaders. Finally, we explore a third defense, which is necessary for when the first two do not work: dealing with a DT leader.

Preparing Minds: Emphasizing the Perils of the Dark Triad

We need to educate management students to approach the concept of "leader effectiveness" (Pfeffer, 2010, 2018) with caution. Students should learn to decouple *personal success and celebrity* from being an effective leader as builder of *sustainable organizational performance*. Educators should strive to strike a balance between students' fascination with heroic leaders and the acknowledgment of fallen heroes. Interestingly, those leaders may be the same people, seen through different lenses at different times—a likely fate for DT leaders. They may initially shine due to leadership as an attributional process (Martinko, Harvey, & Douglas, 2007). DT individuals project an "agentic aura" that aligns with stereotypical leader qualities, contributing to attributions of their being leader-like and their emergence as leaders. However, their effectiveness is often compromised, as they tend to listen less, share less information with others, and exhibit other detrimental behaviors. A DT leader may appear effective at some point, but their "successful" leadership often ends tragically—not only for them but also for the organization they lead. Therefore, it is crucial to raise awareness among management students about the nature and dangers of the DT. As Babiak and Hare (2006: 270) observed:

> We believe that the best defense against psychopathic manipulation is to learn all you can about psychopaths and their nature. While even experts are sometimes fooled, improving your ability to see past their "mask of normalcy" is crucial to your ability to resist their machinations. And knowing how to recognize and interpret their true motives may help you make the decision to distance yourself from them.

TABLE 1
Teaching–Learning Pathways for Dealing with DT Leaders

Preparing Minds: Emphasizing the Perils of the DT
- Equipping students with an awareness of the nature and consequences of the DT.
- Incorporating discussion of DT leaders in management curricula, including in courses on leadership, ethics, governance, and social responsibility.
- Warning students against assuming that because some "successful" and celebrated leaders are "assholes," behaving similarly is *necessary* for leadership effectiveness and success.
- Teaching students to exercise caution when defining "leader effectiveness," and not equating personal success and celebrity with sustainable organization performance. It is important to decouple (sustainable) organizational success from leader personal success.
- Using literature, fiction, and biographies to explore the complexities of human motivation and behavior, including "larger-than-life" characters.
- Encouraging students to read and discuss evidence from pre- versus post-fall DT leaders.
- Clarifying the "toxic triangle" that involves destructive *leaders*, enabler *followers*, and conducive *environments*.
- Warning students that some enablers are powerless victims who enable the DT leader just to survive.

Developing Skills for a "First Defense": Screening or Spotting Dark Traits or Behaviors
- Educating students on how to screen candidates for DT traits.
- Informing them about psychometrically valid measures used to assess the DT and making them aware that almost all DT measures are self-reports.
- Encouraging students to "practice" through taking self-assessments and discussing the results if they feel comfortable doing so. The focus must be put on self-reflection, as well as on the limitations of self-reports, not on the particular scores of each student. After that "self-practice," discussing the limitations of self-assessments in the selection process and the tendency of individuals with DT personalities to provide fake answers is more productive.
- Explaining the advantages and limitations of informant reports, such as 360-degree feedback.
- Enhancing students' ability to recognize manipulative tactics and masks used by individuals with DT traits during interviews.
- Informing students about additional "cautionary" recruitment or selection techniques, such as adopting longer processes and involving employees from different hierarchical levels, to reduce the chances of DT candidates hiding their true nature.

Developing Skills for a "Second Defense": Designing Control or Governance and Transparency-Oriented Mechanisms and Cultures
- Teaching students about creating a culture of psychological safety.
- Informing students of how organizations can influence behaviors through structural and complaint mechanisms, such as ombudspersons and ethics hotlines; robust and independent auditing mechanisms; and strong boards with a high number of independent directors. Emphasizing the importance of checks and balances, including independent external audits that are not controlled by executives.
- Emphasizing the challenges of implementing these mechanisms in environments where they are most needed.
- Educating students about constructing systems that protect the confidentiality of individuals who raise concerns, as DT leaders are known to retaliate, and even "pretaliate," against those who report them. However, it is essential to acknowledge that there are limits to confidentiality.
- Encouraging MBA and postgraduate students to assess and reflect on the *real* organizational context in which they operate (in terms of, e.g., the interplay between DT leadership, team or organizational psychological safety, and the nature and content of organizational structures and processes).

A "Third Defense": How to Deal With A DT Leader
- Providing students with the opportunity to examine how political savvy and socioemotional skills are important in developing awareness and immunity to malevolent leaders.
- Encouraging students to enhance their self-awareness, because self-knowledge strengthens immunity against psychopaths' games and is crucial for followers' survival. Increased self-awareness also helps students to make more informed judgments for each specific situation.
- Educating students on how to avoid participating in or enabling destructive leadership: it is savvy "not to take the bait," and rather to follow the "da Vinci rule": "It is easier to resist at the beginning than at the end."
- Discussing factors that keep employees in unhealthy workplaces, and making students aware that, to protect their mental and physical health, employees may consider quitting the DT leader, or the organization, if necessary.
- Providing students with literature (e.g., Babiak & Hare, 2006; Kets de Vries, 2014; Kets de Vries & Rook, 2019; Sutton, 2017), and facilitating discussions on how employees can deal with DT leaders.
- Discussing the limits of these tools. Educating students to "customize" those tools according to the level of the leader's "dangerousness," the level of team or organizational psychological safety, the "institutional health" of the organization (e.g., are there checks and balances?) and the amount of support from allies.

Students should think reflexively about the DT and its constituents and consequences. This reflexivity can be fostered using case study challenges, discussions on current news items, or even experiential learning exercises that encourage students to critically evaluate their own experiences and biases in relation to the DT. These practices can help students gain a deeper understanding of the

subject and its relevance in real-world scenarios. However, it is important to note that due to the controversial and sensitive nature of DT, some forms of reflexive practice used in other teaching–learning domains may not be advisable or even feasible when dealing with the DT leadership. Students may not be aware of their own DT profile and its consequences for others. Those who are aware may resist acknowledging that they have such a profile (and the correspondent actions) during discussions and shared reflections. It is unrealistic to expect that a DT executive in the classroom is willing to openly discuss their experience as a DT and manipulative leader, as well as the adverse consequences that such a stance has for followers.

With this caveat in mind, the practices mentioned above can be particularly helpful when attempting to understand why and how "heroes" who initially maximized a company's performance later transformed into "villains" who endangered the organizational sustainability or even led to the destruction of the organization (see, e.g., the cases of Enron and Andrew Fastow, Lehman Brothers and Richard Fuld, and Bear Stearns and Jimmy Cayne). The zeitgeist, with its orientation toward "lionized greed" and "blatant instrumentalism" (Yuan, Chia, & Gosling, 2023: 120), may suggest the prevalence of a utilitarian ethos rather than a virtues-based orientation. The number of celebrated DT leaders afflicted by hubris (an "acquired disorder" facilitated by the interaction between being high on DT traits and being praised and celebrated uncritically; Sadler-Smith, 2018; Sadler-Smith, Akstinaite, Robinson, & Wray, 2017; Sadler-Smith & Cojuharenco, 2021) that harmed their organizations would suggest so. Most DT leaders discussed in this paper, once celebrated as heroes, and praised by yes-people and sycophants, were victims of that disorder. While power corrupts (Klaas, 2021), DT leaders are *more power-corruptible*—as Adam Grant (2019) observed, power "exposes who leaders really are" (see also Klaas, 2021). For example, the title of an article published in the *Financial Times* asked: "Hubris—is thy name Richard Fuld?" (Partnoy, 2008: 13). About Ghosn, it was written in *Fortune* magazine (Murray & Meyer, 2022) that "his remarkable turnaround of Nissan earned him a place in Japanese superhero comics" but "his legacy will be defined by his hubris." Destructive leadership often stems from leaders with a DT profile (Krasikova, Green, & LeBreton, 2013; Palmer et al., 2020; Schyns et al., 2022) and the romance of leadership (Bligh et al., 2011). Such reflexivity may be encouraged in several ways.

As management educators, we may recommend the inclusion of not only more novels and fiction as tools to explore the complexity of human motivations and behaviors (the TV series *Succession* may serve as an ideal basis for classroom discussion), but also biographies that delve into the lives of individuals such as Elizabeth Holmes (Carreyrou, 2019), Adam Neumann (Wiedeman, 2020), Carlos Ghosn (Greimel & Sposato, 2021), Jack Welch (Gelles, 2022), and others discussed by Kellerman (2004) and Owen (2022). Novels and biographical works can effectively depict the complex relationship between good and bad, image and substance, and how charisma can mask corruption, decadence, and deceit. Integrating discussions about DT leaders into management curricula, particularly in courses related to leadership, ethics, governance, and social responsibility, is essential. Biographies of DT leaders expose the detrimental effects of evil leadership and highlight the role played by subaltern members. They allow for the analysis of the everyday "mobilizations of bias" (Schattschneider, 1960) that shape organizational processes and contribute to the implementation of evil leaders' strategies in practice (Clegg et al., 2006, 2012; Stokes & Gabriel, 2010).

One effective tool to foster reflexivity is discussing evidence comparing the pre- and post-fall periods of DT leaders. As noted, while the DT may lead to short-term benefits in certain cases, these benefits generally dissipate over time (Nevicka et al., 2018; Palmer et al., 2022; Smith et al., 2018). This decline occurs for several reasons: (a) leaders are no longer able to hide their exploitative actions; (b) the financial gains achieved through ruthless cost-cutting in the short term are unsustainable in the long run due to the destruction of social capital; and (c) the leader's unethical behaviors are eventually exposed, harming the organization's reputation and long-term sustainability. Educators should shift the conversation from debating *only* opinions to discussing opinions in the light of research evidence. Since some students tend to vocally advocate for a pragmatic view of leadership aligned with Pfeffer's perspective, or are fascinated by stories and business media headlines that celebrate leaders who brag about their own alleged accomplishments, it becomes necessary to provide meta-analytical evidence presenting the long-term negative consequences of DT leaders. Educators can encourage students to read and discuss books and media materials about "effective" and celebrated leaders who, ultimately, brought destruction to their organizations, their followers, and the legitimate interests of their stakeholders, and even to themselves. The instructive power of biographies and media material is enhanced when discussed

together with academic papers (e.g., for Elizabeth Holmes, see Straker et al., 2021; Tourish & Willmott, 2023).

Illustrative cases abound of leaders, once celebrated, that were later found to be destructive. Carrie Tolstedt, then head of the community banking division at Wells Fargo, was named as one the most powerful women in business in 2012 by *Fortune* magazine. She was praised as "the best banker in America" (Independent Directors of the Board of Wells Fargo & Company, 2017: 56). Her leadership flaws were accepted "in part because of her other strengths and her ability to drive results" (Independent Directors of the Board of Wells Fargo & Company, 2017: 56). The endorsement contributed significantly to the fake accounts scandal that cost hundreds of millions of dollars in penalties against the company, harming employees and customers. Encouraging students to discuss the report of Independent Directors of the Board of Wells Fargo & Company (2017) will help them realize how the rise and fall of DT leaders share several commonalities. Engaging in such discussions helps students become better at identifying behaviors that facilitate DT leadership (e.g., strong deference to managers, insularity of the leader and their inner circle, resistance to outside intervention and oversight, an aura of success and strong financial performance, even though it may be based on an excessive pressure on subordinates). While these behaviors may appear harmless when viewed in isolation, or excusable during challenging times, they can be highly detrimental in the long run, affecting the organization, its followers, customers and other stakeholders.

To further illustrate the DT in action and its symptoms, let us take the case of Carlos Ghosn, who had also been touted (and self-described; Ghosn, 2007) as Nissan's savior, contributing to the company's revival (Kets de Vries & Florent-Treacy, 2012). In the long-term, he was disastrous for the company and himself (Greimel & Sposato, 2021; Nissan Motor Co. Ltd., 2019). He narrowly avoided jail by being smuggled out of Japan to Lebanon, from which he cannot be extradited. Students can observe the DT in action in Ghosn's leadership by and discussing, for example, *Collision Course* (Greimel & Sposato, 2021) and the *Special Committee for Improving Governance Report* (Nissan Motor Co. Ltd., 2019). Such readings and discussions "give life" to research findings suggesting that, when dealing with hiring top managers, one must "focus on character" and pay attention to personal behaviors (i.e., "over-the-top spending, a focus on personal earnings, and an apparent disregard for rules such as company expense policies") that "can predict which leaders might go astray" (Dey, 2022: 54–55). The "superstar" Carly Fiorina is another case in point. She became the most powerful businesswoman in the United States at the turn of the millennium, when she took the helm of HP (Johnson, 2008). As an indicator of her cult of personality, her portrait hung conspicuously adjacent to portraits of Hewlett and Packard, HP's legendary and revered founders, in the entryway of the company's headquarters (Markoff, 2005). However, she put the company in jeopardy and, having sacrificed others to cover for her flaws and mistakes, she was fired abruptly in 2005. Employees celebrated her departure ("The witch is dead"; Malone, 2007: 386). Students can examine how the DT manifested in Carly Fiorina's actions and decisions, which could enable them to recognize these traits in *current* real-world leadership. Fiorina's case is particularly illustrative because, even after her disastrous performance at the helm of HP, she "shamelessly" campaigned for the Senate in 2010 and ran for president of the United States in 2016 (Bruni, 2015). Pfeffer (as cited in Hill, 2015: 10) commented that she, "who by any objective measure was a horrible CEO, is running for president on *her business record*. I love it! … You can't make this stuff up—it's too good!"

Volkswagen leaders were also praised as builders of an outstanding corporation that carried out admirable efforts in the fields of corporate social responsibility and environmental management (Rhodes, 2016). They fell from grace as a consequence of the events that gave rise to the Dieselgate scandal. Students may get a deeper understanding of this case timeline by reading both Ewing (2017) and business media literature celebrating the company's leaders (see, e.g., Muller, 2013), as well as Volkswagen's annual report 2016 (Volkswagen, 2016) and academic research (Gaim et al., 2021). Such a multisource reflexive exercise may help students to understand that ascribing leaders a heroic status may be dangerous, that it is necessary to be cautious and "dig" deeper to understand *how* those leaders really behave. Students need to learn to be skeptical about leaders who *become* celebrities—what they do, as well as how they do it.

By learning about the toxic leadership triangle discussed above, students will not only be able to identify DT leaders but also to recognize the environments and types of "colluders" and "conformers" that contribute to the perpetuation of those leaders and their capacity to produce perverse effects (Padilla et al., 2007; Thoroughgood et al., 2018). For instance,

research (Tröster & Van Quaquebeke, 2021) has documented that followers may be ready to accept abusive leaders, particularly if they experience positive relationships with them (or high LMX). In such cases, followers may experience feelings of guilt when subjected to abuse and be ready to exert extra effort to demonstrate their worthiness to their abusive leaders. Delicate interpersonal dynamics, involving leaders and followers, are at play. The cases discussed above may thus be used to emphasize to students that those DT leaders did not operate in isolation, and that certain followers' characteristics (e.g., strong need for security and structure; Machiavellianism) and contextual features also played a role. As Padilla et al. (2007) observed, destructive leadership emerges from a complex process involving three key elements: destructive *leaders*, susceptible *followers* (i.e., conformers such as "lost souls," "bystanders," and "authoritarians," and colluders such as "opportunists," and "acolytes'; see also Thoroughgood et al., 2018), and conducive *environments* (e.g., instability and crisis; tough competitive arenas; perceived threat; insufficient internal and external checks and balances; for how uncertainty motivates individuals to look for "strong"—that is, powerful autocratic—leaders, see also Hogg, 2007). Such awareness will help students to understand the importance of the second and third defenses against DT leaders, which we discuss below after considering the first defense.

However, it is important to note that while *also* emphasizing the role of the followers, one should not underestimate the significance of leaders in the destructive process. On the contrary, due to the power imbalance between leaders and subordinates, as well as the *objective* vulnerability of some subordinates, it would be an ethical mistake to place blame solely on the victims. The economic dependence and the need to maintain their jobs to support themselves and their families can render some employees unable to oppose a DT leader and defend themselves from abuse (Buchko, Buscher, & Buchko, 2017; more on this in the subsection about the third defense below). Many Wells Fargo employees who engaged in unethical practices and were subsequently laid off were victims of an aggressive management-by-objectives system characterized by unrealistic sales goals: "In many instances, Community Bank leadership recognized that their plans were unattainable—they were commonly referred to as 50/50 plans, meaning that there was an expectation that only half the regions would be able to meet them." (Independent Directors of the Board of Wells Fargo & Company, 2017: 19). Not only did senior leadership press regional managers to pursue these goals—but managers at lower levels "also explicitly encouraged their subordinates to sell unnecessary products to their customers in an effort to meet the Community Bank's sales goals" (Independent Directors of the Board of Wells Fargo & Company, 2017: 7). While it may have been "convenient" (Independent Directors of the Board of Wells Fargo & Company, 2017: 5) for the company leadership to blame employees, the root cause of their misconduct lay in a greedy leadership that aimed to maximize the company's performance, at any cost, reaping reputational and financial personal compensation benefits (e.g., bonuses). Therefore, the teaching–learning agenda we advocate must include this dimension of the destructive process.

Developing Skills for a First Defense: Spotting or Screening for Dark Traits

Students can be taught how to screen for the "true colors" of DT candidates (Schyns et al., 2022: 259). This is crucial because, by definition, the DT traits are dispositional. After selecting those individuals, it is very difficult to stop them from wreaking havoc. As Kets de Vries and Rook (2019: 220) observed, "it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to successfully coach an executive with psychopathic tendencies, as their emotional capacity is impaired or deactivated. (…) They are exceptionally skilled in manipulating any relationship—including the one with the leadership coach." After getting "their foot in the door," dark personalities hire individuals who support their manipulative tactics to increase their power and climb the corporate ladder (Rotolo & Bracken, 2022; Smith et al., 2018). The higher they rise, the more difficult it becomes to "close the door" and prevent further harm to the social fabric of the team or organization (Rotolo & Bracken, 2022).

While educating students on the indicators and symptoms of DT is important, it is also helpful to familiarize them with psychometrically valid DT measures. Several scales are available with differing content, length, dimensionality, and validity (see, e.g., LeBreton, Shiverdecker, & Grimaldi, 2018, Table 1; see also Rotolo & Bracken, 2022, section "Review of existing dark-side measures"). Discussing these psychometric properties is beyond the scope of this paper. What matters here is how these measures can be used and discussed in the classroom. Almost all DT measures are self-reports (LeBreton et al., 2018;

Muris, Merckelbach, Otgaar, & Meijer, 2017). Students can participate in self-assessments and calculate their scores to understand the components of DT and encourage discussion on which components are more "dangerous" for leadership. Educators can collect scores *anonymously* and provide the class with simple statistics (i.e., average, minimum, and maximum). This procedure, adopted by some of us over the years, has been found to generate self-reflection, curiosity, and fruitful discussions.

Students should also be informed of the limitations of self-reports, including the tendency for individuals with darker personalities to provide false answers (Babiak & Hare, 2006; Muris et al., 2017; Walker et al., 2022). As Babiak and Hare (2006: 246) advised, "a personnel manager who takes the results of such tests at face value or who relies heavily on them for making personnel decisions runs the risk of being conned by someone more test wise than the test administrator." Students can additionally be informed about the validity and practicality of assessments by informants, including 360-degree assessments (Jones & Paulhus, 2014; Mathieu, Hare, Jones, Babiak, & Neumann, 2013; Mutschmann et al., 2022). It is important to note that data from informants can also be limited. DT leaders who anticipate an assessment may use intimidating tactics or impression management to control the informants' answers (Babiak & Hare, 2006; LeBreton et al., 2018).

Caution should also be taken with regard to interviews. Individuals with DT personalities often display desirable traits such as assertiveness, charm, self-confidence, and other impression-management tactics to manipulate the interviewer. Due to the limited time for the interview, their DT nature may not be revealed (Jonason, Slomski, & Partyka, 2012). As Muris et al. (2017: 198) observed, "narcissists, Machiavellians, and psychopaths often present themselves in a disguised way to other people and tend to wear a mask to hide the darker features of their personality." The storytelling abilities of those with DT personalities further reinforce their embellished résumés. Babiak and Hare (2006: 104–105)[7] warned that with DT individuals "the whole package they present can be quite compelling. Unfortunately, if hiring decisions are based on easily faked résumés and unstructured interviews by untrained interviewers, (…) the company runs the risk of hiring someone who is a fraud."

Two other interrelated cautionary recruitment or selection procedures may be discussed in classrooms. First, management students should be made aware that longer selection processes make it more difficult for DT candidates to hide their true nature (Rotolo & Bracken, 2022; Schyns et al., 2022). Second, including employees from different hierarchical levels in the selection and promotion processes can be helpful, as DT candidates are likely to exhibit different behaviors toward employees depending on those employees' instrumental "value" for them (Horton & Sedikides, 2009; Schyns et al., 2022). Observing such a chameleonic stance can be very instructive. These cautionary procedures may conflict with time constraints and efficiency goals but aid in detecting "fabrications" and manipulation attempts, preventing future surprises, and, in the long-term, establishing more sustainable and effective selection systems (Babiak & Hare, 2006).

Discussing these first defense mechanisms can be particularly instructive for human resource management (HRM) students and practitioners. HRM departments prioritize assessing skills and competencies *required* to perform jobs, neglecting to consider perverse candidate characteristics. Competency modeling usually only focuses on skills and competencies that lead to success in leadership positions, and "rarely (…) attempt" to screen for individual characteristics that can cause leadership failure (Rotolo & Bracken, 2002: 311). Such neglect can be dangerous as qualities often sought in leaders, such as confidence and ambition, may also be watermarks of DT personalities (Judge et al., 2009). As Hogan, Curphy, and Hogan (1994: 499) observed,

> many managers who are bright, hard-working, ambitious, and technically competent fail (or are in danger of failing) because they are perceived as arrogant, vindictive, untrustworthy, selfish, emotional, compulsive, overcontrolling, insensitive, abrasive, aloof, too ambitious, or unable to delegate or make decisions.

More recently, Hogan et al. (2021: 199) also noted that the mainstream leadership research has a "positivity bias": it focuses on the desirable leadership attributes and neglects "the unpleasant reality" that many leaders behave badly and cause great harm to people and organizations. Therefore, as Rotolo and Bracken (2022: 278) recommended, "not only should talent assessment help to hire, develop, and promote the best person for the role, but it should also help to weed out the harmful and even dangerous behaviors and individuals."

[7] When educating students to spot dark personalities and be more effective in dealing with them, educators must be aware that they are also "educating" DT individuals on dark or manipulating tactics.

Developing Skills for a Second Defense: Governance and Transparency-Oriented Mechanisms

To counter the possibility of a failed first defense, it is necessary to establish a second that will help to neutralize, or mitigate, the potentially harmful effects of DT leadership. Such a defense helps to counterbalance or mitigate the risks associated with the "conducive environment" side of the toxic triangle mentioned earlier. First, it is crucial to educate students on establishing a culture of psychological safety, where members feel comfortable speaking up about any leadership misbehavior or wrongdoing (Edmondson, 2018). In contexts characterized by high psychological safety, DT leaders are less likely to thrive. However, DT leaders may bully employees who speak up, creating a paradox where psychological safety is least likely to be achieved in the very contexts where it is most needed. One possible way to mitigate this paradox is to incorporate moral courage (Detert & Bruno, 2017; Osswald, Greitemeyer, Fischer, & Frey, 2010) and other moral strengths in policies and practices aimed at selecting not only managers but also employees. Without the moral courage of certain employees, several DT leaders might never have been exposed (cases of Theranos and Enron are illustrative). Morally courageous followers are less likely to act as "susceptible followers" and are more inclined to contribute to building the second defense.

Students should also be informed that organizations can shift behaviors by consistently communicating and promoting ethical guidelines and aligned performance systems. Suppression of DT may also be achieved via structural mechanisms of complaint (e.g., ombudsperson, ethics hotlines, complaints systems), strong and independent auditing mechanisms, as well as strong boards with a high number of independent directors promoting a system rich in checks and balances that is not controlled by the executives. Disciplinary action and severing corrupted units may function as solutions of last resort, as well as acting as a preventive warning system (Schyns et al., 2022). Human resource departments play a fundamental role in creating and implementing these practices. Caution must be taken to build systems that protect a complainer's confidentiality, as DT leaders are prone to taking revenge and retaliating against the complainers and alleged "foes," whether real or potential (Giammarco & Vernon, 2014; Rasmussen, 2016).

Competent governance is crucial for establishing a system of checks and balances that guards against destructive leadership behaviors. Buyl, Boone, and Wade (2019) found that, while CEO narcissism can increase the riskiness of a bank's policies, this effect is dampened with effective board monitoring, particularly through the presence of knowledgeable outsider directors. Mutschmann et al. (2022) found a strong correlation between the DT of managers and instances of accounting manipulation. These practices can be prevented by utilizing independent *external* audits instead of relying solely on internal ones. DT managers may manipulate internal personnel through fear of retribution for whistleblowing, but it is more challenging to manipulate external providers, making them a better option. This is evident in the case of the Community Bank, where CEO Carrie Tolstedt actively discouraged sharing information with anyone outside her "inner circle," including the chief risk officer and the Enterprise Risk Management Committee (Contu, 2023).

Students should therefore be taught how to design organizational structures and processes, with a focus on governance and transparency-oriented mechanisms, to mitigate the potentially devastating effects of DT traits. In this regard, discussions on cases of governance failure, such as the examples of Carrie Tolstedt, Elizabeth Holmes, and Carlos Ghosn, as well as the more recent case of Sam Bankman-Fried (Oliver, Asgari, & Shubber, 2022), the disgraced FTX founder, can be useful in demonstrating the importance of proper governance. For instance, in the case of Mr. Ghosn's Nissan, governance mechanisms were impeded to meet "Mr. Ghosn's demands for his personal gain" (Nissan Motor Co. Ltd., 2019: 12). Nissan lacked a culture of voice, with board meetings lasting less than 20 minutes on average, since Ghosn disliked questioning and threatened those who voiced dissenting views. Similar issues were also observed with Carly Fiorina (Johnson, 2008).

It is worth emphasizing that this component of the second defense is also limited, as DT leaders are prone to resist creating, and even to destroy or weaken, systems of checks and balances that prevent irresponsible and fraudulent behavior. However, the presence of checks, balances, and institutional controls to tame DT leaders are often lacking in contexts where they are most needed. To get a more (situated) awareness about this complex challenge, MBA and postgraduate students, as well as other students with work experience, may be encouraged to diagnose and reflect about the *real* organizational context in

which they work. A possible path consists in providing them with (and discussing with them) a kind of checklist of the most important aspects mentioned in this subsection as representing the second defense (e.g., "Does the board include independent or outsider directors?" "Is the board a psychologically safe place in which it is safe to voice concerns, speak up, and disagree with the CEO?"). Students may also be encouraged to assess (or invite team or organizational members to anonymously assess) the level of psychological safety of their teams or organizations (scales are available in, e.g., Edmondson, 1999). These exercises may be particularly instructive if combined with assessing the actual leader of their team or organization through a measure of DT. Overall, discussing and helping students understand the interplay between the leader's DT profile, the level of psychological safety, and the nature and content of organizational structures and processes may be highly pedagogical for understanding how the toxic triangle unfolds. However, considering the sensitive nature of these exercises, they must be used for reflection only. Sharing individual scores in the classroom is ill-advised.

Obviously, one cannot discard the possibility of having DT participants in the classroom, who will use the discussion to learn how to develop manipulation tools and cover their true toxic nature. While addressing this issue is outside the scope of this paper, we believe that making those DT individuals in the audience aware of the dangers, for themselves, of adopting toxic and abusive leadership may encourage them to develop more functional behaviors. Maybe they will refrain from adopting some toxic behaviors after learning about the cases of once celebrated leaders who later descended into scandal, shame, and ruin. We acknowledge, however, that this optimism may be somewhat naïve regarding, at least, psychopath leaders (Babiak & Hare, 2006; Kets de Vries & Rook, 2019).

A Third Defense: How to Deal with a DT Leader

When the first two defenses are not effective enough, organizational members (including leaders in low- or middle-level positions and leaders-to-be) may be faced with dealing with DT leaders. Such a possibility is realistic. As Babiak (as cited in Deutschman, 2005) noted, "the New Economy, with its rule-breaking and rollercoaster results, is just dandy for folks with psychopathic traits." Oliver James (2013: 4), author of *Office Politics: How to Survive in a World of Lying, Backstabbing and Dirty Tricks,* observed that, in such environments,

> the likelihood of your daily working life being sacrificed by a person who is some mixture of psychopathic, Machiavellian, and narcissistic is high. If you do not develop the skills to deal with them, they will eat you for breakfast.

Therefore, educators should make students understand that political savvy and socioemotional skills and competencies are important in developing awareness and immunity to malevolent leaders. While this may be a difficult and challenging endeavor (because, e.g., DT leaders do not see power as a relational phenomenon; rather, they aim to gain and conserve *power over* others and *remove power from* others, as discussed above), the complexity of which requires discussion in another paper, we next consider some possible interrelated tools and guidelines.

First, students may be encouraged to enhance their self-awareness. Babiak and Hare (2006: 271) observed that because "psychopaths feed on what they see as naïveté and innocence," self-knowledge "will strengthen your immunity against psychopaths' games" and "is crucial for your psychological, emotional, and, possibly, physical survival." Increased self-awareness will also help students make more informed judgments according to the particularities of each situation. Second, it is crucial to educate students on how to avoid participating in or enabling destructive leadership, given that it is a process cocreated by DT leaders in conducive environments with susceptible followers (Padilla et al., 2007; Palmer et al., 2020; Thoroughgood et al., 2018). Students must be made aware that a manipulative leader instrumentalizes followers for pursuing their own agenda. Such a leader may encourage followers to adopt unethical behavior that later puts them in a dangerous position—and it is unrealistic to expect that such a leader will show remorse or protect followers. It is instead more likely that such a leader protects their own "skin" at the expense of followers. Therefore, students must be aware that it is savvy "not to take the bait," and instead follow the "da Vinci rule": "It is easier to resist at the beginning than at the end" (Sutton, 2017: 159).

Third, educators may provide students with literature, and facilitate discussions, on how to deal with dark personalities (e.g., Babiak & Hare, 2006; Kets de Vries & Rook, 2019; Sutton, 2017). First, it is important to teach students that identifying DT personalities requires "recognizing the condition" (Kets de

Vries & Rook, 2019): dealing with a narcissistic leader is different from dealing with a psychopath leader or a leader high on the three DT traits. Students may also be made aware that, to protect their mental and physical health, they may consider leaving the DT leader (e.g., through moving to another organizational unit) or even the organization, if necessary. Educators may help students to identify factors (including psychological, relational, and emotional traps) that keep employees in unhealthy work environments. Recommending that students read and discuss the article "Why do good employees stay in bad organizations?" (Buchko et al., 2017) may be very instructive. When quitting is the best and most feasible solution, it is important to make a "clean getaway" (Sutton, Latham, & Whyte, 2017). Impulsive resignations and confrontational actions must be avoided, in that they may backfire due to retaliation from the DT leader. Departing in "calm, considerate, and discrete ways" may be wiser. However, DT leaders "are thin-skinned. They are prone to lash out at, blame, and try to screw someone who doesn't flatter and kiss up to them." In those situations, it "might be better off keeping things upbeat, brief, and vague—and just get the hell out" (Sutton, 2007: 64–65).

When staying is the choice, Sutton's (2017) work offers valuable insights on potential actions when faced with a DT leader. Encouraging students to read and discuss that work may have high pedagogical value, because Sutton supported his guidelines with research and plenty of practical cases. Sutton's (2017) suggested three approaches: (a) adopting avoidance techniques that allow reducing the exposure to the DT leader; (b) developing "mind tricks" that protect the employee's "soul" (e.g., psychological and emotional detachment); and (c) fighting back (e.g., "love bombing," "ass-kissing," playing to the leader's weaknesses), in non-impulsive ways, together with allies and supported in documentation. Considering the nature of DT personalities, it is important that students understand the limits of these techniques and learn to "customize" them according to the leader's "dangerousness," the level of psychological safety in the organization, the "institutional health" of the organization (e.g., are there checks and balances?), and the amount of support from allies. In addition to the "survival guide" recommended by Sutton (2017), educators may refer to students and discuss the work of Kets de Vries (e.g., Kets de Vries, 2014; Kets de Vries & Rook, 2019; Kets de Vries et al., 2016) and Bazerman (2022). Specifically regarding psychopathic leaders, reading and discussing Chapter 10 (particularly pp. 269–289) of *Snakes in Suits: When Psychopaths go to Work* (Babiak & Hare, 2006) may also be pedagogically valuable.

Future research may explore how different follower profiles participate in the DT process. Some followers may serve as enablers who benefit from the DT leader's actions. For other followers, enabling may be a survival mechanism, especially if they lack the strategies that Sutton (2017) listed. On the other hand, certain direct reports may find themselves victimized by the DT leader and see survival as their primary strategy, regardless of the means. Some direct reports may fall into the category of victims or survivors who are also targets and have acquired tools and strategies to navigate the situation and assist others, even assuming potential risks, such as in the case of whistle-blowers. Further exploration is necessary to gain a comprehensive understanding of life within the circle of the DT leader, particularly from the follower's perspective.

CONCLUSION

Considering the legacy of the once celebrated Jack Welch, David Gelles (2022: 2) wrote, "even when the results are disastrous, even when our heroes turn out to be crooks, we can't help but want for more." Indeed, management scholars seem to want for more such dangerous heroes. We should be more judicious in the theories we teach and the heroes we idolize. Ghoshal (2005: 76) noted, "By propagating ideologically inspired amoral theories, business schools have actively freed their students from any sense of moral responsibility." Such a propagation is particularly harmful because, as theories produce self-fulfilling effects, "societies, organizations, and leaders can become trapped in unproductive or harmful cycles of behavior that are almost impossible to change. Inconsistent evidence is unlikely to emerge because people don't try, or even contemplate, acting in any manner that clashes with accepted truths" (Ferraro, Pfeffer, & Sutton, 2005: 21).

In this essay, we have argued that management educators have the moral duty to challenge an accepted, albeit incorrect, "truth"—that DT leadership is functional. Findings that the DT *may* be associated with some positive outcomes does not make these traits desirable. We endorse Ghoshal's (2005) manifesto in defense of good theories of management, exploring why utilitarian conceptions of effectiveness constitute a blank check for bad management theories that nourish the "infernal cycle" and prevent managing organizations in the

pursuit of the "shared destiny" mentioned earlier in this paper. If our society is governed by Machiavellian leaders with their rules of power (Pfeffer, 2022), the world will suffer. Few, if any, would enjoy a worthy life ("An eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind," Gandhi is attributed to have warned) (Shapiro, 2022: 282). We need to reconsider how we teach leadership (By, 2021; Collinson & Tourish, 2015), making clear that the unfettered pursuit of dark traits, even if it leads to personal success and celebrity, is ultimately counterproductive for leadership effectiveness, as well as being socially, politically, and economically dangerous.

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