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# Dark Triad Unleashed : Examining Trait-Activating Effects on Counterproductive Work Behavior

Danielle Tarantino  
*Montclair State University*

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## **Abstract**

Meta-analytic research has revealed widely varying but generally weak associations linking the Dark Triad traits – narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy – to counterproductive work behaviors. Several moderators of this relationship have been investigated, but there is currently no framework that exists to categorize and organize these moderators. Drawing on trait activation theory, an organizing framework of moderators is offered to explain the variation in findings on the Dark Triad (DT) and counterproductive work behaviors (CWB). This 4R framework organizes moderators as relevant, restraining, regulatory and resourceful. Moderated multiple regression was conducted for each moderator in each category in order to determine which classes of moderators are supported. Results reveal mixed effects for the theories proposed with respect to the 4R framework. Moderators that strengthened the relationship between the DT and CWB included instigators such as adversity, deceptive environments, strains such as burnout and negativity, and being inherently aggressive. Moderators that suppressed the relationship between DT and CWB included expectations on workers such as consistent procedures and in-group collectivism, perceived position power, organizational constraints and income rise prospects.

Thesis Signature Page

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

Dark Triad Unleashed: Examining Trait-Activating Effects  
on Counterproductive Work Behavior

by

Danielle Tarantino

A Master's Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of  
Montclair State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Master of Arts

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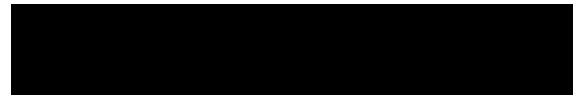
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Department of Psychology

Thesis Committee:

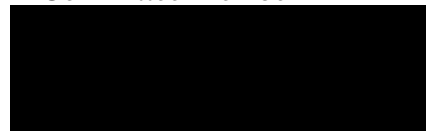


Daniel Simonet



Kevin Askew

Committee Member



Tina Zottoli

Committee Member

DARK TRIAD UNLEASHED: EXAMINING TRAIT-ACTIVATING EFFECTS ON  
COUNTERPRODUCTIVE WORK BEHAVIOR

A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Master of Arts

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Danielle Tarantino

Montclair State University

Montclair, NJ

2019

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction and Overview

Counterproductive work behaviors (CWB) are deliberate actions to harm an organization or its members. It has been estimated that anywhere from 33% to 75% of employees report engaging in counterproductive work behaviors such as theft, sabotage, and unexcused absenteeism with these types of behaviors accounting for annual losses of up to nearly \$3 trillion dollars (Harper, 1990; McGurn, 1988; Bennett & Robinson, 2000). Previous research has investigated possible predictors of CWBs, with the Dark Triad (DT) traits – narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy – being advanced as possible candidates for workplace deviance due to their callous nature (Wu & LeBreton, 2011). Narcissists are arrogant and egotistical, often engaging in self-enhancement behaviors in an attempt to make themselves look better than others. Machiavellians are manipulative and power-hungry, constantly looking for ways to exploit others in order to benefit themselves. Psychopaths are impulsive and reckless, with little concern for societal norms or the harm they cause for others. Since members of the DT share a common core of disagreeableness and self-interest (Paulhus & Williams, 2002), these traits seem to be conceptually linked to harmful work behaviors.

Despite the commonalities between the DT and CWBs, the O’Boyle, Forsyth, Banks & McDaniel (2012) meta-analysis suggests that the DT have modest associations with CWB (Machiavellianism  $r_c = .20$ , Narcissism  $r_c = .35$ , Psychopathy  $r_c = .06$ ). Results show relatively wide credibility intervals – ranging from  $-.10$  to  $.66$ , with  $I^2$  ratios approaching one for each trait, indicating substantive moderation. These results also suggest that average effects should be disregarded in favor of situational specificity

(Koslowsky & Sagie, 1993). Several moderators of this relationship have been investigated, such as abusive supervision (Greenbaum, Hill, Mawrtiz & Quade, 2014), interpersonal conflict (Meurs, Fox, Kessler & Spector, 2013), ingroup collectivism (O'Boyle, Forsyth, Banks, McDaniel, 2012; Grijalva & Newman, 2014), power (Wisse & Sleebos, 2016), constraints on performance (Castille, Kuyumcu, & Bennett, 2017), and many more.

As this literature matures, many moderators have been proposed to inform *when* and *where* those high on the DT are likely to commit CWB. However, findings are scattered across separate domains and subdomains of thinking, leaving little in the way of a shared taxonomy to organize converging and diverging ideas. This study is a response to the call by LeBreton, Shiverdecker, and Grimaldi (2018, p. 22) to, “Systematically map the situational/contextual [and person] variables that serve to trigger/exacerbate or constraint/dampen the impact of the DT on organizational outcomes” by condensing the DT-CWB literature into a single meta-theoretical framework to guide future studies, comparisons, and communication. The framework can be used for more precise hypotheses and, consequentially, lead to greater refinements, enhancements, falsifications, and integrations of multiple theories on factors which counterbalance or amplify the effects of the DT on CWB. Additionally, this framework advances the current literature by being the first to organize moderators of the DT-CWB relationship. Our goal in creating this framework is to test the most robust explanations of the variabilities in where and when deviant individuals are likely to engage in CWB. In addition to advancing the literature on this subject, the results of this study can be a valuable resource to organizations aiming to reduce counterproductive work behaviors.

## CHAPTER 2

### **The 4R Framework**

Before the conceptual framework is offered, a brief overview of relevant theories is warranted, as they provide a useful foundation for building our 4R model. Trait activation theory presents a person-situation interactionist model of job performance which specifies conditions under which personality predicts performance and argues that personality traits are expressed as work behaviors in response to trait-relevant situational cues (Tett & Burnett, 2003). Specifically, “[a] situation is relevant to a trait if it is thematically connected by the provision of cues, responses to which (or lack of responses to which) indicate a person’s standing on the trait” (Tett & Burnett, 2003, p. 502). Hence, the behaviors of the trait and situational demand must possess thematic correspondence, such that individuals possess a trait which predisposes them to enact a specific class of behaviors when a situational cue is present. For example, if observing an individual in a sales job, certain cues (i.e. presentations, interactions) will give rise to variable expression in the underlying trait of extraversion. Responses to these cues indicate a person’s standing on this trait – walking away from a customer would indicate low extraversion while engaging in multiple interactions with them would indicate high extraversion. Because of the thematic correspondence between the cue (presenting) and the trait (extraversion), the situation is considered relevant and the activation of these traits is more likely to predict job performance. On the other hand, if studying extraversion in library workers, the situational demand does not match the trait – library workers’ job demands’ generally do not require extraverted demands, so there is a lack of opportunity to engage in extraverted behavior. As a result, a library would not provide the

trait-relevant situational cues needed to study extraversion – thus, it would not predict job performance. Applying this theory to the DT, one can argue that the DT are comprised of tendencies that are only expressed as behaviors in trait-relevant contexts – situations providing cues that call forth the expression of the DT (e.g., provocation, resource contests). When situations are relevant to the DT, it is more likely for them to engage in DT tendencies, and thus more likely to lead to CWBs.

On the other hand, there may be situations which restrict the expression of the DT, such as in “strong” situations. Situational strength is the quantitative intensity of behavioral guidelines (e.g., rules, norms, incentives) for a given situation (Meyer & Dalal, 2009). Strong situations involve cues that provide clear guidance to expected behavior, leading to less variance in trait-expressive behavior. Relevance and strength are distinct features of the situation – it is possible for a situation to be strong or weak but not relevant to the trait, and vice-versa (Judge & Zapata, 2015). Continuing with the example above, the extraverted individual in the sales job may have been told that if they don’t interact with customers throughout the day, they will be terminated – this situation is both relevant to the trait of extraversion by the provision of cues (interactions) and strong due to the threat of termination if the individual fails to be extraverted. Conversely, the librarian may be told they will receive a bonus if they are able to learn how to use a new software that no one at the library knows how to use. This situation, while not relevant to the trait of extraversion, is still strong as it offers incentives based on certain behavior. Applying this theory to the DT, one can argue that there are certain situations which limit the ability to express personality traits – specifically strong situations that outline expected behavior. When situations are strong or involve obligations or expectations

from the DT, it is likely for them to restrain from engaging in DT tendencies, leading to less engagement in CWBs.

While relevance and strength are distinct external cues, many theories argue intra-individual mechanisms or individual characteristics can also dampen or amplify one's standing on DT. Thus, our model expands upon relevance and strength as distinct features of the situation to include the moderating possibility of these intra-individual components. For example, the regulatory process in individuals may influence whether or not they curb desirable urges to act a certain way. Specifically, self-regulatory failures may lead to individuals acting on their current, momentary urges. When applying this theory to the DT, one can argue that those high on DT are less likely to engage in CWB when they are able to self-regulate. In times of high stress such as when experiencing burnout, the inability to self-regulate may make them more likely to act out as they are less likely to resist their ability to act on their impulses (i.e. their dark tendencies) and maintain appropriate behavior. Social-exchange theory also plays a role in this self-regulatory process – if the DT feel as if there is something regulating the exchange between them and the organization (i.e. support, fairness), they may be more likely to keep their bad sides in check, thus leading to less engagement in CWBs.

Certain characteristics about the individual may also allow the DT to hide their true intentions. Socioanalytic theory argues that the two basic motives underlying personality are the desire to get ahead and the desire to get along. The DT may have certain characteristics, such as being politically-skilled, that allow them to manage their impressions in order to *appear* like they are getting along and getting ahead, despite their intention to only get ahead. In contrast, there are certain characteristics that when coupled

with the DT, may make them more likely to ignore the socially acceptable behaviors involved with “getting along” and push them to simply “get ahead”, thus leading to a higher likelihood of engaging in counterproductive work behaviors.

Before moving to a comprehensive review of reported moderators of the DT-CWB relationships, a conceptual framework is offered that further draws upon these theories in order to organize moderators of the DT-CWB relationship into four categories – relevance, restraint, regulation and resourcefulness – a 4R model. These categories vary by the source and function, with source referring to whether the moderator is largely an individual or a situational factor, and function indicating whether or not the moderator acts as an activator or suppressor of the DT. Specifically, categorizing moderators by source answers the question of “when” and “in whom” does the DT relate to CWB while categorizing moderators by function answers the question of whether trait expression becomes more pronounced or constrained.

The 4R framework categorizes types of moderators by source of the moderator, that is, if it is an individual/intra-individual or situational characteristic that is either amplifying or suppressing the effects of the DT. The conceptualization of these moderators as either individualistic or situational helps us better understand if there is something about the situation at work that is prompting the DT to engage in more CWBs or something about the individual that is amplifying this effect. This distinction is important because measures taken to prevent CWBs at an organization will vary based on the source. For example, if the DT is more likely to act out in an environment characterized by adversity, the organization can work on creating a more positive, trusting environment to prevent this from occurring. However, if the DT is more likely to

act out when they have a high level of authority in the organization, this poses a more complex problem for organizations, as simply creating a more positive environment may not matter due to these individual characteristics. Additionally, it is important to examine the source of the moderators that suppress the DT traits, as this can provide valuable information to organizations about what helps keep their DT employees in check. As such, the 4R model aims to categorize moderators in order to determine “when” and “in whom” the DT leads to CWBs, which not only helps advance the literature but also provides organizations with important information regarding reducing CWBs.

The 4R model also categorizes types of moderators by the function of the moderator, that is, if it suppresses or amplifies the DT. Outside of the scope of the DT traits, one can easily think of situations in which certain characteristics may be amplified or suppressed depending on the context of the situation. For example, an individual’s level of extraversion may be amplified on a sales job interview. This could be due to the situation (i.e. the interviewee is easy to talk to) or due to something about yourself (i.e. the desire for the job) which results in an amplification of a trait you may already have. Conversely, there are certain situations which may call for suppression of a trait. While amplifying your level of extraversion on an interview may be beneficial in some situations, suppressing your level of neuroticism may also be beneficial. Neuroticism calls forth many negative qualities about an individual that may make them appear to be unfit for a job – thus, we often suppress these traits for our own self-interest. Expressing and suppressing different traits leads to different outcomes (i.e. expressing neuroticism on a job interview will probably not result in a job offer while suppressing it might). By the same token, there are certain situations or individual characteristics that lead the DT

to either “shut off” their dark tendencies or that amplify these tendencies. An amplification of these dark tendencies is more likely to lead to CWBs while a suppression of these tendencies should not lead to relationships with CWBs.

The four categories proposed in the 4R framework are relevance, restraint, regulation and resourcefulness. Simply stated, the relevance category of the 4R model refers to those aspects of the situation that call forth the expression of the DT, while the restraints category refers to aspects of the situation that suppress the expression of the DT. Regulation refers to those individual or intra-individual mechanisms that lead to the suppression of the DT, while resourcefulness refers to those that call forth the expression of the DT. Table 1 indicates moderators of the DT-CWB relationship reported in the literature since Paulhus & Williams’s report on the Dark Triad (2002) and how they are classified into the four categories of this framework. This table can be used in future research to test moderators that this study did not test and to determine if they fit in the proposed categories. A detailed explanation of each category using relevant theories as well as how certain moderators reported in the literature were situated into these categories is provided below.

### **Relevance**

Drawing from trait activation theory, relevance suggests qualitatively different situations correspond to distinct traits (Tett & Burnett, 2003). Individual traits are activated based on trait-relevant cues, such as a socially demanding job bringing forth the expression of extraversion. The behaviors of the trait and situational demand must possess thematic correspondence, such that individuals possess a trait which predisposes them to enact a specific class of behaviors when a situational cue is present. Personality



traits, when combined with trait-relevant situational factors, can provide a basis for predicting workplace behavior (Tett & Burnett, 2003). Several relevant moderators are proposed in this study which we believe will activate the DT in individuals, making it more likely for them to engage in CWBs. Moderators tested in this study that fall under this category are adversity, deception, ascendancy and income prospects, interpersonal conflict, workplace incivility and organizational constraints.

Any external situational cue associated with intentional harm are more likely to elicit retaliation from the DT given their propensity towards self-interest. The DT's grandiose, reckless, and cold nature provides a lowered threshold of reactivity to threats to protect self-interests. Our review identifies four possible moderators which fit this instigator category – adversity, interpersonal conflict, workplace incivility and organizational constraints. First, direct provocation arising from any events or discrete acts which directly and normatively provoke aggression, such as threats to ego, physical attacks, or insults. In one study, Jones and Paulhus (2010) showed narcissists and psychopaths were more likely to react aggressively when insulted or physically provoked, respectively. Environments high in provocation are considered *adverse* situations in terms of greater frequency of threats, criticisms, and blame (Rauthmann et al., 2014). Second, mistreatment from others in terms of abuse, incivility, and conflict isolates regular working relationships as low-intensity forms of disrespect, such as being rude, hostile, or bullied by others. In one study, abusive supervision was shown to activate a Machiavellian's tendencies to engage in unethical work behavior (Greenbaum, Hill, Mawritz, & Quade, 2014). Similarly, Penny and Spector (2002) showed narcissists are more likely to engage in CWBs when treated poorly by peers. Finally, organizational

constraints are situations/ things which interfere with task performance (Spector & Jex, 1998). These would constitute *hindrances* in the stressor-challenger framework which elicit frustration and irritation, but are not attributable to a human agent. Rather, the organization is perceived as purposefully obstructing the employee leading to a heightened willingness to harm. Both Machiavellians and narcissists were more likely to engage in varied forms of deviance when experiencing such hindrances (Meurs, Fox, Kessler, & Spector, 2013; Castille, Kuyumcu & Bennett, 2017).

On the other hand, there may be cues in the environment that reward DT tendencies, making it more likely for these individuals to express these traits. *Deceptive* situations are characterized by mistrust, betrayal and opportunities for undermining and sabotage (Rauthmann et al., 2014). These cues are especially salient in competitive or politicized environments. Enterprising occupations (Holland, 1997), in particular, encourage manipulation, argumentation, and competition to attain personal goals. Two enterprising characteristics, *ascendency* and *income rise prospects*, have been shown to activate the predatory orientation of managers high in psychopathy (Blickle, Schutte & Genau, 2018). Additionally, Machiavellians are motivated to undermine their peers to get ahead in competitive environments. By doing so, they focus less on their job duties and are more likely to engage in counterproductive work behaviors (Castille, Kuyumcu & Bennett, 2017). In these environments, DT traits are likely to be rewarded leading to a greater likelihood of eliciting their deviant propensities.

**Hypothesis 1: All moderators in this category will strengthen the relationship between the Dark Triad and counterproductive work behaviors.**

## **Restraint**

Situational moderators which restrict variation in behavior fall into the restraint category by lowering the probability a given trait will predict a corresponding trait-relevant behavior (Cortina, Koehler, Keeler & Nielson, 2018). The moderators tested in this category are ethical leadership, in-group collectivism, situational strength and duty. Drawing heavily from situational strength, restraints can be thought of as aspects of the job that limit how much freedom the individual has when making decisions about how to act.

Any external situational cue associated with strong expectations of behavior are more likely to repress the DT traits due to the restrictions on alternative behaviors. Our review identifies two possible moderators which fit this category – the situational strength facets and in-group collectivism. Strong situations are characterized by clarity, consistency, constraints and consequences (Meyer, Dalal & Hermida, 2010). Strong situations will suppress DT expression because deviant behavior is more restricted in the presence of a clearly understood, coherent job which carries substantial limitations and consequences in performance. For instance, a construction job with a strict and uniform protocol makes it easier to monitor actions which may deter DT's from engaging in harm to others or the business. Similarly, a managerial job which limits decision-making while also punishing bad decisions may weaken the DT-CWB association by gradually winnowing out variance due to the person. Collectively, strong situations make it more likely those high on DT will be governed by the position rather than their malevolent nature, leading to a weakened DT-CWB association. Additionally, previous research has shown that as ingroup collectivism at an organization increased, narcissists engaged in

less CWBs (O'Boyle, Forsyth, Banks & McDaniel, 2012). This may be because cultures like this are less likely to tolerate DT violations because they value loyalty and cohesiveness to the organization – values that are incongruent with the DT traits. Although it is possible that those high in DT may lash out due to these incompatibilities in values, the presence of high consequences for these types of behavior may prevent them from doing so. Violating values in a collectivistic culture may have more consequences than in cultures who don't emphasize these values. As a result, it is possible that these expectations of behaviors may override their urge to express DT traits and engage in CWBs.

A distinction is made between organizational constraints as conceptualized by Spector and Jex (1998) in the relevance category and constraints as conceptualized by Meyer, Dalal & Hermida (2010) in the Situational Strength at Work Scale (SSW). While the SSW conceptualizes constraints as “the extent to which an individual's freedom of decision and action is limited by forces outside his or her control”, Spector and Jex (1998) define constraints as “situations/things that interfere with task performance at work”. The Organizational Constraints Scale (OCS) (Spector & Jex, 1998) correlates most strongly with role ambiguity and role conflict and less so with autonomy ( $r = -0.21$ ) while constraints as measured by the SSW had a stronger correlation with autonomy ( $r = -.46$ ). Thus, the OCS measures organizational constraints as not having the resources needed for the job (i.e. poor equipment/supplies, inadequate training) and is less about decision authority. These types of constraints may have differential effects on the likelihood of the DT engaging in CWB. Not having the resources needed to do one's job

may lead to competition for resources, which could lead to CWBs, but not having the authority to make decisions may influence DTs differently.

External situational cues associated with obligations to the organization may also be considered restraints. Two moderators – ethical leadership and duty – may fall into this category of restraints. If an individual feels as if they have a job that needs to be done (duty), they may be more likely to suppress their DT traits. If a job emphasizes the importance of duty, there is a demand for organization and accomplishment. This demand may, in turn, influence how the DT acts by restraining their ability to engage in CWBs. Without the demand for organization and accomplishment, many people may focus on their own interests rather than the interests of the company. However, when high levels of duty are present, self-interested behavior is controlled. This is especially difficult for individuals high in DT traits because they are self-absorbed and interested in their needs only. Because of the control on self-interested behavior, it is more difficult for individuals to engage in counterproductive acts (Cohen, 2015). In addition to duty, the obligation to be ethical and fair to employees may also restrain the DT tendencies. Fair treatment of employees has been found to reduce counterproductive work behaviors, extending to even those with the DT, as Machiavellians tended to restrain from displaying organizationally undesirable behaviors under highly ethical leaders (Greenberg 1990; Belschak, Hartog & De Hoogh, 2018). Abusive supervision and ethical leadership have been argued to be conceptual opposites, with ethical leadership emphasizing appropriate behavior which has positive outcomes and abusive supervision indicating inappropriate behavior which leads to negative outcomes (Palanski, Avey & Jiraporn, 2014). Despite their strong conceptual linkages, they may not be empirical

opposites – Palanski, Avey & Jiraporn (2014) found that these two constructs function differently with respect to turnover. Because of this, ethical leadership is investigated separately from abusive supervision, as it is possible that they may have differential effects on counterproductive work behaviors. While it is believed that abusive supervision may activate the DT, ethical leadership may suppress it.

**Hypothesis 2: All moderators in this category will weaken the relationship between the Dark Triad and counterproductive work behaviors.**

### **Regulation**

The regulatory process reflects the notion of willpower, or the mechanisms within people that curb desirable urges or natural tendencies given they have the resources. When individuals experience self-regulatory failures, they act on their current, momentary urges (Baumeister, Heatherton & Tice, 1994; Finkel, 2009). Similarly, individuals low on self-regulation may be unlikely to curb their urge to express their DT traits. In addition, when individuals feel as if they are a victim of an injustice or broken contract, they experience temporary self-regulation impairment. The self-regulation impairment perspective argues that surprising occurrences – failed pay raise, broken promise – draw mental resources for event processing, thus depleting the reservoir of mental energy needed to maintain appropriate behavior in the face of other abuses (Thau & Mitchell; 2010). Supporting this idea, Thau & Mitchell (2010) found high levels of organizational injustice strengthened the indirect effect of abusive supervision on deviance through self-regulatory impairment. Moderators included in the regulatory category are burnout, negativity, overall justice, and perceived organizational support.

Social exchange theory (SET; Blau, 1968) implies a regulatory process in which actors reciprocate based upon the weighing of costs and benefits they expect to receive. Unless relationships are rewarding enough to produce obligation, trust, and mutual commitment which bind and regulate the exchange – i.e., attitudinal structures modifying the transaction – the DT are unilaterally likely to take more and invest less in their interpersonal transactions (Blau, 1968). However, if DT individuals can self-regulate, then undesirable outcomes become less likely. This means paying careful consideration to how such individuals are managed. Two moderators in this category that emphasize this social-exchange perspective are perceived organizational support and overall justice. Liu et al. (2017) found perceptions of unfairness moderated the relationship between narcissism and self-interested behavior such that narcissistic managers withdrew from social obligations to compensate for threatened self-esteem. They found that narcissists expected better treatment and fulfilled obligations when they were recognized; hence, as long as things were fair, narcissists keep their bad side in check. In support of this, employees are more deviant when they perceive their outcomes as inequitable and are more likely to sabotage others when they perceive the organization as unjust (Greenberg, 1993b; Ambrose, Seabright & Schminke, 2002). Additionally, it has been argued that individuals who are treated unfairly (by the organization or leaders) are more likely to engage in deviant behaviors (El Akremi, Vandenberghe, Camerman, 2010). Injustice at an organization may instill a negative norm of reciprocity, where retaliatory acts of deviance may serve as ways to restore balance due to the unfair treatment. However, when organizational support is present, these acts of deviance may be reduced. In support of this, individuals high in psychopathy and narcissism engaged in less CWBs when they

perceived their organization as supportive (Palmer, Komarraju, Carter & Karau, 2017). A supportive organization may also reduce ego-threat for narcissists, as they may feel as if the organization is boosting their sense of self-importance by supporting them.

Additionally, POS may reduce provocation for psychopaths, who may have more positive perceptions of the organization due to their support (Palmer, Komarraju, Carter & Karau, 2017).

Given dark side tendencies emerge under periods of duress (Hogan & Hogan, 2001), employees high on DT may find themselves acting out in an environment of cognitive overload, stress, and physical exhaustion (Kaiser, LeBreton, & Hogan, 2015). Self-control deteriorates as limited self-regulation resources are depleted. As a result, individuals experience strain which may lead to an expression of the DT traits. Two moderators that fit in this category of strain are negativity and burnout. If individuals are experiencing negativity, stress, and burnout at their jobs, their self-regulation abilities may be deteriorating, as they are consistently drawing upon this resource. Agreeableness has been shown as a buffer against experiencing stress (Vollrath, 2001), and since DT's tend to be low in agreeableness (Paulhus & Williams, 2002), they may be more likely to act out if they cannot self-regulate in the presence of stressful situations. Individuals whose self-regulatory strength is depleted act upon their urges across a variety of domains more than those whose self-regulatory strength is not depleted (Baumeister, Vohs & Tice, 2007). As a result, it's likely that individuals high in DT who are experiencing stress, negativity or burnout at work are more likely to express their DT traits and engage in CWBs, whereas those who can self-regulate may be more likely to suppress these traits.



**Hypothesis 3a: Overall justice and perceived organizational support will weaken the relationship between the Dark Triad and counterproductive work behaviors.**

**Hypothesis 3b: Negativity and burnout will strengthen the relationship between the Dark Triad and counterproductive work behaviors.**

### **Resourcefulness**

Moderators such as political skill may allow the DT to channel malevolent tendencies toward more socially desirable aims, making political skill a useful “resource” for the DT. Socioanalytic theory argues that there are two basic motives underlying personalities: the desire to get ahead and the desire to get along (Hogan, 1983). Although the DT’s motive is to get ahead while not getting along, it is possible they may manage impressions to “appear” to get along to get ahead. These two motives can be conflicting, as the desire to get ahead involves behaviors such as seeking power and status which may counter one’s ability to feign cooperation and friendliness. However, political skill enables those high on the Dark Triad to mask selfish and cruel intentions, allowing them to get what they need or desire while still appearing they are helpful rather than harmful (Schütte et al., 2018). A socially skilled narcissist may self-promote in a way that inspires confidence rather than scorn whereas a socially adept Machiavellian may persuade organizations to give them resources rather than covertly taking what they want for themselves. Supporting this effect, Schütte et al. (2018) found interpersonal influence counterbalanced the harmful effects of psychopathy on CWB presumably because it helps such employee adapt their behavior in situationally appropriate ways. Additionally, “dark” behaviors were considered more effective when the individual had high

sociopolitical awareness (Cruickshank & Collins, 2015). These effects are supported by socioanalytic theory which argues that political skill helps individuals package their motives (to get along and to get ahead) into organizational successes (Hogan, 1983). As a result, it is likely that DT individuals lacking political skill may defer to deviant acts to compensate for their inability to “work the system”, thus strengthening the association between DT and CWB.

In contrast, certain individual characteristics may make the DT more likely to go after their desire to get ahead while ignoring socially acceptable behaviors to get along. For example, members of the DT who are in control or high on promotion orientation are more likely to behave in socially undesirable ways (e.g., abuse peers, take from others) and engage in less helping behaviors (Wisse & Sleebos, 2016; Smith, Wallace, & Jordan, 2015). Individuals who have a promotion-focus are focused on achievement and more likely to go after opportunities and take risks to get what they desire. They maximize their visibility by pursuing risks and are more likely to be noticed by supervisors (Wallace et al., 2010; Hogan & Holland, 2003), making the DT traits more salient and disruptive to others. Since Smith, Wallace & Jordan (2015) found that the negative relationship between DT and task performance was strengthened when employees had a promotion-focus, it is likely that promotion-focused DT individuals would also be more likely to engage in CWBs. Similarly, individuals with power may be more likely to engage in self-serving behaviors and pursue more rewarding outcomes because they are not as concerned about the consequences of their actions as opposed to the powerless (Rus & Wisse, 2010). These individuals may not feel as if they have to “get along” with others because they are in a position of power. Supporting this effect, perceived position

power has been found to strengthen the relationship between Machiavellianism and abusive supervision in work teams (Wisse & Sleebos, 2016). O'Boyle, Forsyth, Banks & McDaniel (2012) found conflicting results – that psychopathy had a weaker relationship to CWBs among samples of workers in authority roles; however, the overall relations between the DT and job performance were small. In addition, as opposed to measuring whether employees work in an authority role (i.e. police officers, military), this study is focusing on how position power in a variety of roles influences the DT's effect on CWBs.

Other individual characteristics that may prevent the DT from being resourceful in the way they achieve their desire to get ahead includes dispositional aggression and locus of control. When coupled with the DT, these characteristics may promote the expression of deviant tendencies, leading to more CWBs. Michel & Bowling (2013) argued that a narcissist who is higher in trait aggression may be more likely to be overtly forceful and engage in more aggressive behaviors. Not surprisingly, they found that the relationship between narcissism and CWBs was higher when dispositional aggression was high. In addition, the relationship between psychopathy and CWB was stronger when individuals believed they couldn't control aspects of their lives (Ersoy-Kart et al., 2018). This effect has been supported with those who believe in good luck being more likely to engage in corruption (Zhao, Zhang & Zhu, 2016) and an external locus of control being positively correlated with moral disengagement, a key component of the DT (Detert, Trevino, Klebe & Sweitzer, 2008). Therefore, an individual's level of mastery is being investigated as a moderator that amplifies the relationship between the DT and CWBs.

**Hypothesis 4a: Political skill will weaken the relationship between the Dark Triad and counterproductive work behaviors.**

**Hypothesis 4b: Perceived position power, dispositional aggression, locus of control, and promotion-orientation will strengthen the relationship between the Dark Triad and counterproductive work behaviors.**

**Table 1**  
*Moderators of the relationship between DT and CWBs*

Category	Moderator	Findings	Citation
Relevance	Abusive supervision	When abusive supervision was present, Machiavellians were more likely to engage in unethical behavior.	Greenbaum, Hill, Mawritz, & Quade (2014)
Relevance	Ascendency & Income Prospects	For those with high ascendancy and income prospects, higher levels of overall psychopathy were associated with lower levels of considerate leader behavior.	Blickle, Schutte & Genau (2018)
Relevance	Public negative feedback	Narcissism only predicted aggression when negative feedback was given publicly.	Ferriday, Vartanian, Mandel (2011)
Relevance	Organizational Constraints	The more competition there were for resources, the more likely the DT was to engage in CWBs. The relationship between Machiavellianism and production deviance was stronger when organizational constraints were high.  Organizational constraints were found to provoke CWBs in narcissists.	Castille, Kuyumcu, & Bennett (2017)  Meurs, Fox, Kessler & Spector (2013)
Relevance	Interpersonal conflict	Interpersonal conflict was found to provoke CWBs in narcissists.	Meurs, Fox, Kessler & Spector (2013)
Relevance	Delayed feedback	The more delayed feedback was, the more likely narcissists showed aggressive tendencies.	Martinez, Zeichner, Reidy & Miller (2008)

Restraint	Ethical Leadership	Under highly ethical leaders, Machiavellians don't show organizationally undesirable behaviors.	Belschak, Hartog & De Hoogh (2018)
Restraint	Ingroup collectivism	As IGC increased, the relationship between narcissism and CWBs become weaker.	O'Boyle, Forsyth., Banks, & McDaniel (2012). Grijalva, E., and Newman, D. A. (2014).
Restraint	Psychological safety	The more psychological safety felt at work, the less likely it was for Machiavellians to engage in social undermining.	Kuyumcu, D. (2013). Doctoral dissertation.
Restraint	High-performance work systems	The association between DT traits and managerial derailment was weaker when high-performance work systems were in place.	Agarwal, P. (2017).
Restraint	Situational strength – constraints, consequences, clarity, consistency	In “strong” situations, individuals act in a way dictated by the situation regardless of their traits.  Org. transparency (clarity), org. policies (constraints), org. culture/climate (consistency) proposed as moderators.  Consequences -Employees who perceive they are unlikely to be caught, or that they would be dealt with leniently if caught, are more likely to engage in CWBs.	Meyer, Dalal & Hermida (2010).  Cohen (2016)  Fine, Horowitz, Weigler & Basis (2010)
Restraint	Job control	When there is higher job control (skill discretion and authority), it is more likely for the DT to engage in CWBs.	Baka (2018).
Resourcefulness	Perceived position power	Machiavellianism was only related to abusive supervision in teams when supervisors perceived their position power to be high.	Wisse & Sleebos (2016)
Resourcefulness	Political skill	When psychopaths were more politically skilled, they were less likely to engage in CWBs.  When individuals have high sociopolitical awareness, dark behaviors are considered more effective.	Schutte, Blickle, Frieder, Schnitzler & Heupel (2018)  Cruickshank & Collins (2015).

	Sociopolitical awareness		
Resourcefulness	Dispositional aggression	When aggression is high, the relationship between narcissism and CWBs is stronger.	Michel & Bowling (2012)
Resourcefulness	Promotion focus	When psychopaths and narcissists are more promotion-focused, they receive worse performance ratings.	Smith, Wallace & Jordan (2015)
Resourcefulness	Interpersonal influence	The higher interpersonal influence an individual has, the less likely they are to engage in CWBs.	Blickle & Schutte (2017)
Resourcefulness	Belief in good luck	When individuals have a belief in good luck, they are more likely to engage in corruption.	Zhao, Zhang & Zu (2016)
	Chance locus of control	Chance locus of control is positively correlated with moral disengagement (related to DT and CWBs).	Detert, Trevino, Klebe & Sweitzer (2008)
	Helplessness – cognitive distortion of feeling unable to control important aspects of their lives.	Feelings of helplessness strengthened the relationship between psychopathy and CWB.	Erssoy-Kart et al., (2018).
Regulation	Perceived organizational support	The higher POS, the less likely for the DT to engage in CWBs.	Palmer, Komarraju, Carer, & Karau (2017)
	Involvement management climate	Higher involvement management climate buffered negative effects of DT.	Webster & Smith (2018)
Regulation	Leader unfairness perceptions	Unfairness perceptions moderate the effects of narcissism on leaders' self-interested behavior.	Liu et al., (2017).

Regulation	Self-control	The higher self-control a narcissist has, the less likely it is for them to aggress.	Harrison (2010) – Doctoral dissertation.
Regulation	Stress	<p>Agreeableness has been shown as a buffer against experiencing stress.</p> <p>Since DT's tend to be low in agreeableness, they may be more likely to act out if they cannot self-regulate in the presence of stressful situations.</p>	<p>Vollrath (2001)</p> <p>Paulhus &amp; Williams (2002).</p>
Regulation	Educational level	The higher educational level of DTs, the less likely they are to engage in CWBs.	Blickle & Schutte (2017)
Regulation	Authority	Psychopathy had weaker relation to CWB for workers in authority roles.	O'Boyle, Forsyth., Banks, & McDaniel (2012).

## CHAPTER 3

### Methods

#### Participants and Procedures

Data were collected through a Qualtrics survey linked to Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), a crowdsourcing marketplace where participants complete human intelligence tasks (HITs) in exchange for compensation. The psychometric properties of MTurk responses to surveys has been validated in previous research (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). Additionally, it has been found that MTurkers workers are more attentive to survey instructions than college students (Hauser & Schwarz, 2015). The current study was designed and administered via TurkPrime, a research platform for social scientists that integrates with MTurk in order to automate payments, exclude participants based on certain criteria, and closely monitor data quality.

Using the TurkPrime panel feature, participants were restricted to part-time and full-time employees and were invited to a 15-minute survey regarding personality and the workplace. Participants who indicated they were retired, unemployed or a student were excluded from further participation. Participant qualifications included a HIT approval rating of at least 95% and approved completion of at least 100 HITs to improve response quality (Hauser & Schwarz, 2015). Data was collected only from participants in the United States and double IP addresses were blocked to prevent the duplicate workers.

A total of 340 MTurk workers completed the study. A careless response scale was used to exclude participants' who were not paying attention to the survey questions (Maniaci & Rogge, 2014). This scale included 11 infrequency items such as "I enjoy receiving telemarketers' calls" and "I love going to the DMV". Infrequency scales consist of items that should elicit nearly identical responses from most respondents. Higher



scores on infrequency scales indicate inattentive responding as receiving a high score on these items are very unlikely. The average score on the careless response scale was 1.58 ( $SD = 0.73$ ). Participants' whose mean score were 1 standard deviation above the mean ( $M = 2.31$ ) or more were excluded. Although the recommended cut-off score in Maniaci & Rogge (2014) was 2.2 SDs above the mean, we chose stricter cut-off scores because it is proposed that some high quality MTurkers may learn to become more attentive and pass these scales at higher rates over time through exposure (Hauser & Schwarz, 2015). Based on this criteria, 29 participants' data were removed from further analyses. One participant was also excluded due to completing the survey in under 4.89 minutes. The average response time for survey completion was 23.29 ( $SD = 12.27$ ). The 4.89-minute cut-off was created by calculating the time that was 1.5 standard deviations below the mean. Workers not flagged for careless response were rewarded \$2.00 for data completion. Data was collected over the course of a week. There was an 85% completion rate for those who signed up to take the survey. The final number of participants who were included in analyses was 310.

The sample was predominantly male (53.23%) with an average age of 40.84 years ( $SD = 10.62$ ) and 82.26% White (Black = 7.42%, Hispanic = 8.17%, Asian = 1.3%). Average tenure was 7.58 years ( $SD = 5.91$ ) with 44.5% of the sample reporting an annual salary of \$25,000 – \$49,000 (\$50,000-\$74,000 = 21.1%, less than \$25,000 = 20.1%). 39.4% held a 4-year college degree (some college experience = 21.3%, 2-year degree = 14.8%, high-school graduates = 11.3%, Masters/professional degree = 11.3%). Participants' reported a diverse variety of jobs with several management positions in retail, HR, marketing, and finance and other jobs such as teacher, nurse, administrative

assistant, accountant, web developer, cashier, data analysts, office manager, IT support and restaurant workers.

## **Literature Review**

Table 1 provides several moderators of the relationship between DT and CWBs reported in the literature since Paulhus & Williams's report on the Dark Triad (2002). Each moderator is classified into one of the four categories of the 4R framework. Three databases – PSCYInfo, PSYCArticles and Google Scholar – were searched using generic keywords such as “CWB” and “Dark Triad”. In order to ensure comprehensiveness, each DT trait was searched with specific variations of CWBs such as “sabotage”, “deviance”, “theft”, “abuse”, “aggression”. 30 studies were identified that reported moderators of the DT-CWB relationship and these moderators were categorized into the relevance, restraint, regulation or resourcefulness category of the 4R framework. A total of 23 moderators were tested in this study based on frequency of appearance in theoretical or empirical investigations.

## **Measures**

**Short Dark Triad (SD3; Jones & Paulhus, 2014).** The SD3 is a 27-item self-report which assesses Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism with 9-item scales. A replicable 3-factor structure has been reported, with internal consistencies ranging from .68-.78 as well as convergent validity of the SD3 scales with the original measures of the Dark Triad (Jones & Paulhus, 2014) Sample items from the Machiavellianism subscale are “It’s not wise to tell your secrets” and “I like to use clever manipulation to get my way. Sample items from the psychopathy subscale are “People often say I’m out of control” and “Payback needs to be quick and nasty”. Sample items from the narcissism

subscale are “I insist on getting the respect I deserve” and “People see me as a natural leader”.

**Workplace Deviant Behavior Scale (WDB; Bennett & Robinson, 2000).** The WDB is a 19-item scale that distinguishes between deviant behavior directed at the organization and deviant behavior directed against individuals at work. The organizational subscale (WDBO) consists of 12 items and the interpersonal subscale (WDBI) consists of 7 items. These subscales were combined into a composite for analyses because we are interested in both the organizational and interpersonal aspects of CWBs. Sample items from the WDBO scale include “come in late to work without permission” and sample items from the WDBI scale include “makes fun of someone at work”.

**Situational Eight DIAMONDS. Subscales: Adversity, Deception, Duty & Negativity (Rauthmann et al, 2014).** The S8\* is a 24-item revised version of the RSQ-8 that measures eight major dimensions characterizing a majority of pre-existing situational taxonomies: situations; duty, intellect, adversity, mating, positivity, negativity, deception and sociality (see Rauthmann et al., 2014). These dimensions provide a common language of the most salient psychological and descriptive attributes describing differences in everyday situational experiences. For the relevance category, we used adversity and deception as both reflect salient negative environmental features related to self-defensive and self-interested behavior. Adversity is defined as the existence of general threats (“there is a high potential to be blamed for something”) and deception as whether mistrust and betrayal is present (“it is possible to deal with others in a dishonest way”). The duty facet was used as a restraint as it demands organization and

accomplishment. A dutiful situation suggests something must be done which requires effort and focus (“minor details are important”). The negativity facet from was classified as a regulator as it is associated with stress and frustration. A negative situation suggests the experience of negative emotions (“there are many frustrations”). Participants are to think about their general work environment and rate the degree to which each statement best characterizes their work situation.

**Organizational Constraints Scale (OCS; Spector & Jex, 1998).** The OCS is an 11-item scale that measures how often employees find it difficult to do their job based on various constraints. Examples of constraints in this scale are “poor equipment or supplies”, “inadequate training”, and “interruptions by other people”.

**Ascendency and Income Prospects (Blickle, Schutte & Genau, 2018).**

Ascendency and income prospects items were based on Seifert and Bergmann’s work values inventory (1983). These items measure how much an individual thinks they can rise in the organization and increase their income. Each type of prospect was measured with 3 items. Sample items for ascendency prospects include “In my job I can get ahead” and “In my job I have good career opportunities”. Sample items for income prospects include “In my job I have the opportunity to make a lot of money” and “In my job I can get extra bonuses”.

**Interpersonal Conflict at Work Scale (ICAWS; Spector & Jex, 1998).** The ICAWS is a 4-item scale that measures the frequency in which individuals experience interpersonal conflict at work. Sample items include “How often do you get into arguments with others at work?” and “How often are people rude to you at work?”.

**Workplace Incivility Scale (Cortina, Kabat-Farr, Leskinen, Huerta, & Magley, 2013).** A 4-item measure of the 12-item updated Workplace Incivility Scale (Cortina et al., 2001) was used following the recommendation by Matthews and Ritter (2016). This scale assesses if an individual has experienced incivility at work in the past month by a supervisor or coworker. Sample items include “paid little attention to your statements or showed little interest in your opinions” and “made jokes at your expense”.

**Situational Strength at Work Scale (SSW; Meyer, Dalal, & Hermida (2010).** A 28-item measure of the four facets of situational strength; clarity, consistency, constraints and consequences. Sample items for the clarity subscale include “On this job, specific information about work-related responsibilities is provided”. Sample items for the consistency subscale include “On this job, procedures remain completely consistent over time”. Sample items for the constraints subscale include “On this job, an employee is prevented from choosing how to do things”. Sample items for the consequences subscale include “on this job, other people are put at risk when an employee performs poorly”.

**Psychological Collectivism (Jackson, Colquitt, Wesson & Zapata-Phelan, 2006).** A 15-item scale that measures psychological collectivism as a multidimensional construct. The scale includes three items measuring five facets of psychological collectivism; preference, reliance, concern, norm acceptance, and goal priority. Participants are to think about work groups they currently belong to or belonged to in the past and answer the questions about their relationships and thoughts about those groups. Sample items include “Working in those groups was better than working alone”, “I care

about the well-being of those groups”, and “I cared more about the goals of those groups than my own goals”.

**Ethical Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ; Yukl, Mahsud, Hassan & Prussia, 2013).** The ELQ is a 15-item scale that measures the relevance of ethics to effective leadership. Individuals are to indicate how well each of the statements provided describe their current boss. Sample items include “shows a strong concern for ethical and moral values” and “insists on doing what is fair and ethical even when it is not easy”.

**Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI; Demerouti, Bakker, Vardakou & Kantas, 2003).** The OLBI is a 16- item measure of two dimensions of burnout; disengagement and exhaustion. Only 8 negatively-keyed items were used based upon the findings of Qiao & Schaufeli (2011). Sample items from the disengagement subscale include “It happens more and more often that I talk about my work in a negative way”. Sample items from the exhaustion subscale include “During my work, I often feel emotionally drained”.

**Perceived Overall Justice Scale (POJ; Ambrose & Schminke, 2009).** The POJ is a 6-item scale that consists of three items that assess individuals’ personal justice experiences (e.g. “Overall, I’m treated fairly by my organization” and three items to assess the fairness of the organization generally (e.g. “For the most part, this organization treats its employees fairly”). Sample items include “Overall, I’m treated fairly by my organization” and “In general, I can count on this organization to be fair”.

**Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS; Eisenberger, Huntingon, Hutchinson & Sowa, 1986).** The 8 item-version of the 36-item SPOS was used following the recommendation of Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002, p.699). This scale

measures two facets of perceived organizational support; valuation of employees' contribution and care about employees' well-being. Sample items include "The organization values my contribution to its well-being" and "The organization cares about my general satisfaction at work".

**Political Skill Inventory (PSI; Ferris et al., 2005)** The PSI is an 18-item instrument that measures the four critical dimensions of political skill: networking ability, apparent sincerity, social astuteness and interpersonal influence. The networking ability subscale includes items such as "I spend a lot of time at work developing connections with others"; the apparent sincerity subscale includes items such as "I try to show a genuine interest in other people"; the social astuteness subscale includes items such as "I understand people very well" and the interpersonal influence subscale includes items such as "It is easy for me to develop good rapport with most people". Political skill was analyzed at the facet-level and as a composite.

**Work Regulatory Focus Scale (WRF; Neubert et al., 2008).** The WRF is an 18-item scale that measures the regulatory focus of employees at work. Nine items measure a promotion focus and nine items measure a prevention-focus. Only the promotion-focus subscale was used as it is most linked to the topic of interest. Sample items include "I take chances at work to maximize my goals for advancement".

**Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ; Buss & Perry, 1992).** Dispositional aggression was measured using the hostility and anger subscales (15 items) of the BPAQ as recommended by Michel & Bowling (2012). The physical and verbal aggression subscales were excluded in order to ensure aggressive personality was being measured as opposed to aggressive behaviors, especially since our criterion (CWBs)

includes these aggressive behaviors. Sample items from the anger scale are “When frustrated, I let my irritation show” and “Sometimes I fly off the handle for no good reason”. Sample items from the hostility subscale are “I am suspicious of overly friendly strangers” and “At times I feel have gotten a raw deal out of life.”

**Perceived Position Power (Wisse & Sleebos, 2016).** A 7-item scale that assesses the amount of control supervisors perceived to have over valued resources. Sample items include “I have the authority to fire my subordinates” and “I control the resources of my subordinates”.

**Mastery Scale (MS; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978).** The MS is a 7-item scale that measures an individual’s level of mastery, “the extent to which one regards one’s life-chances as being under one’s own control in contrast to being fatalistically ruled” (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). Sample items include “There is really no way I can solve some of the problems I have” and “I often feel helpless in dealing with the problems of life”.

### **Data Analyses**

We independently investigated all possible interactions using moderated multiple regression. Product terms were created after first mean-centering all predictors. Variables and interaction terms were entered hierarchically. Interactions for narcissism, psychopathy and Machiavellianism with each moderator was examined. Significance was indicated at the .10 level since the goal of this study is to organize and extend a large number of possible moderators.



## CHAPTER 4

### Results

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics and correlations among the different variables studied. CWB significantly correlates with psychopathy ( $r = .39, p < 0.05$ ) and Machiavellianism ( $r = .34, p < 0.05$ ) but not narcissism ( $r = -.05, p > .05$ ). With the exception of the duty subscale, internal consistencies ranged from .74- .97, indicating high reliability. The duty subscale of the situational DIAMOND taxonomy had an internal consistency of .46, indicating low reliability. This may be due to some differences in items such as “minor details are important” and “I am pressured to fulfill my duties”, which both emphasize the importance of duty but do not necessarily have to correlate with each other.

Moderated multiple regression results for relevance cues are presented in Table 3. Although Hypothesis 1 proposed that interaction terms in this category would be positive, analyses reveal mixed results. Additionally, results were mixed based on the DT trait examined, with most (but not all) of the psychopathy interactions being positive – indicating that these moderators mostly activated psychopathic tendencies. Psychopathy interacted with adversity ( $\beta = .07, p < .05$ ) and deception ( $\beta = .07, p < .05$ ). These interactions are plotted in Figures 1 and 2 and demonstrate individuals who are high on psychopathy are more likely to engage in CWB when working in adverse or deceptive environments.

Although it was expected that high organizational constraints would activate the DT in individuals, results demonstrate that the relationship between narcissism and CWBs becomes stronger when organizational constraints is low ( $\beta = -.07, p < .10$ ). This interpretation is confirmed by Figure 3 which shows that high organizational constraints

does not influence the relationship between narcissism and CWB. Instead, high organizational constraints were most likely to lead to engagement in CWBs regardless of how narcissistic an individual was. However, low constraints (i.e. having the necessary resources to do your job) may act as an activator for those high on narcissism.

Interactions with income prospects and psychopathy ( $\beta = -.05, p < .10$ ) and Machiavellianism ( $\beta = -.04, p < .10$ ) were also negative, indicating opportunities to make more money at work may act as a buffer for the DT to engage in CWBs as opposed to an activator. Interaction plots reveal that for individuals high in Machiavellianism and psychopathy, the inability to make more money in their jobs is more likely to lead to engagement in CWBs. Interactions with interpersonal conflict and incivility were not significant, indicating that more job-related characteristics about the situation (deception, organizational constraints, income prospects) may have more of an influence on the DT than interpersonal experiences regarding others at work such as conflict or incivility.

**Table 2***Descriptive Statistics, Internal Consistencies and Correlations among Key Variables*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	
1. Narc	3.28	1.10	<b>.83</b>																												
2. Psycho	2.28	.82	.39	<b>.74</b>																											
3. Mach	3.94	1.03	.32	.59	<b>.83</b>																										
4. DT	3.17	.77	.75	.80	.81	<b>.88</b>																									
5. Adversity	2.63	1.22	.01	.45	.43	.36	<b>.74</b>																								
6. Deception	4.39	1.54	.06	.34	.45	.35	.42	<b>.83</b>																							
7. Org Constr	1.80	.73	-.07	.28	.34	.22	.59	.40	<b>.90</b>																						
8. Ascendency	3.88	1.41	.34	.01	-.06	.14	-.40	-.19	-.40	<b>.82</b>																					
9. Income	2.65	1.33	.36	.09	.03	.21	-.21	-.17	-.28	.80	<b>.78</b>																				
10. Conflict	1.59	.57	.08	.41	.32	.33	.64	.40	.56	-.28	-.16	<b>.81</b>																			
11. Incivility	2.12	1.23	-.02	.33	.34	.26	.57	.35	.66	-.31	-.16	.63	<b>.81</b>																		
12. Clarity	5.00	1.26	.16	-.24	-.20	-.10	-.48	-.22	-.46	.40	.27	-.34	-.33	<b>.93</b>																	
13. Consist	4.81	1.26	.10	-.28	-.26	-.17	-.59	-.32	-.59	.48	.34	-.50	-.48	.80	<b>.91</b>																
14. Constraint	3.77	1.25	-.05	.16	.19	.12	.46	.21	.43	-.36	-.26	.43	.45	-.19	-.38	<b>.91</b>															
15. Conseq	4.21	1.06	.15	.08	.11	.15	.18	-.03	.05	.08	.06	.10	.09	.15	.10	.33	<b>.80</b>														
16. Duty	5.52	.90	-.07	.03	.12	.03	.21	.23	.20	.05	-.08	.12	.14	.06	-.00	.20	.38	<b>.46</b>													
17. IGC	4.86	1.05	.06	-.29	-.32	-.22	-.39	-.21	-.36	.42	.27	-.34	-.28	.41	.46	-.24	.15	.13	<b>.92</b>												
18. Ethical Ld	5.07	1.46	-.01	-.32	-.28	-.24	-.56	-.33	-.56	.51	.33	-.51	-.54	.52	.66	-.39	.09	.05	.52	<b>.97</b>											
19. Negativity	4.25	1.56	.15	.31	.37	.20	.70	.42	.58	-.41	-.32	.53	.48	-.48	-.60	.48	.20	.36	-.37	-.49	<b>.86</b>										
20. Burnout	3.64	1.50	-.13	.35	.40	.24	.67	.38	.68	-.51	-.33	.57	.60	-.47	-.59	.50	.11	.23	-.49	-.57	.75	<b>.92</b>									
21. Org Justice	5.16	1.52	.09	-.26	-.25	-.16	-.65	-.32	-.60	.58	.40	-.55	-.53	.58	.72	-.54	-.03	-.02	.53	.75	-.62	-.68	<b>.97</b>								
22. POS	4.84	1.61	.16	-.19	-.21	-.08	-.58	-.29	-.53	.65	.47	-.47	-.50	.57	.71	-.56	.05	.00	.52	.73	-.58	-.66	.89	<b>.80</b>							
23. Pol Skill	5.02	1.02	.39	-.11	-.18	.07	-.39	-.20	-.32	.51	.38	-.28	-.27	.42	.44	-.34	.19	.09	.52	.44	-.35	-.43	.51	.59	<b>.94</b>						
24. Promotion	4.49	1.07	.50	.13	.13	.36	-.10	-.02	-.07	.54	.45	-.05	-.13	.18	.19	-.21	.24	.11	.27	.19	-.14	-.20	.24	.38	.55	<b>.85</b>					
25. Aggression	2.99	1.10	-.05	.55	.52	.40	.55	.35	.47	-.36	-.22	.45	.51	-.35	-.45	.32	.02	.08	-.47	-.40	.56	.64	-.46	-.41	-.33	-.22	<b>.90</b>				
26. Pos Power	3.07	1.74	.31	.15	.08	.23	-.10	.02	-.10	.48	.41	.02	-.15	.20	.21	-.31	.13	.06	.12	.18	-.12	-.19	.28	.37	.48	.41	-.15	<b>.93</b>			
27. Mastery	4.76	.93	.26	-.23	-.24	-.06	-.43	-.18	-.40	.53	.38	-.31	-.39	.35	.39	.27	.09	-.04	.44	.41	-.48	-.55	.46	.48	.46	.48	-.63	.27	<b>.91</b>		
28. CWB	1.72	.66	-.05	.39	.34	.29	.46	.42	.50	-.22	-.16	.51	.58	-.34	-.41	-.14	-.03	.13	-.33	-.34	-.22	.53	-.37	-.35	-.23	-.10	.51	-.01	-.29	<b>.86</b>	

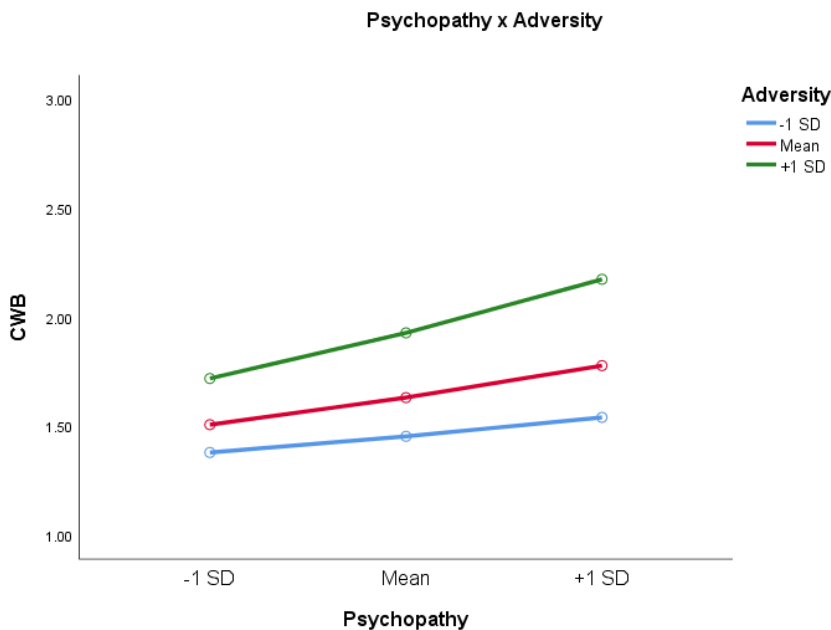
Note: Significant results ( $p < 0.05$ ) are achieved for correlation magnitude  $> .11$ . Reliability estimates (Cronbach's alpha) of scales are in parenthesis on the diagonal. Narc = narcissism. Psycho = psychopathy. Mach = machiavellianism. DT = Dark Triad. Org Const = Organizational Constraints. Consist = Consistency. Conseq = Consequences. IGC = in-group collectivism. Ethical Ld = Ethical Leadership. POS = perceived organizational support. Pol Skill = Political skill. Pos Power = Position power. CWB = Counterproductive work behaviors.

**Table 3***Moderated Multiple Regression for Relevance Cues and Dark Triad in Predicting CWB*

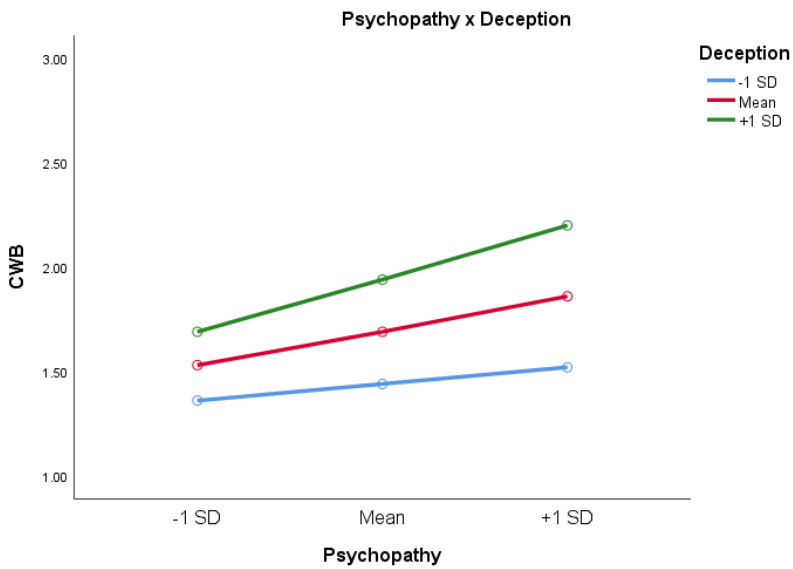
Interaction	$\beta$	$R^2$
Narc x Adversity	.00	.21
Psych x Adversity	.07**	.26
Mach x Adversity	-.01	.23
Narc x Deception	.00	.18
Psych x Deception	.07**	.26
Mach x Deception	.03	.21
Narc x Org Constraints	-.07*	.51
Psych x Org Constraints	.05	.32
Mach x Org Constraints	-.06	.29
Narc x Ascendency Prospects	-.01	.04
Psych x Ascendency Prospects	-.03	.20
Mach x Ascendency Prospects	-.04	.16
Narc x Income Prospects	-.02	.31
Psych x Income Prospects	-.05*	.19
Mach x Income Prospects	-.04*	.15
Narc x Interpersonal Conflict	-.04	.27
Psych x Interpersonal Conflict	.04	.27
Mach x Interpersonal Conflict	-.06	.30
Narc x Incivility	-.00	.33
Psych x Incivility	.04	.38
Mach x Incivility	-.01	.26

Note. Narc = Narcissism; Psych = Psychopathy; Mach = Machiavellianism.

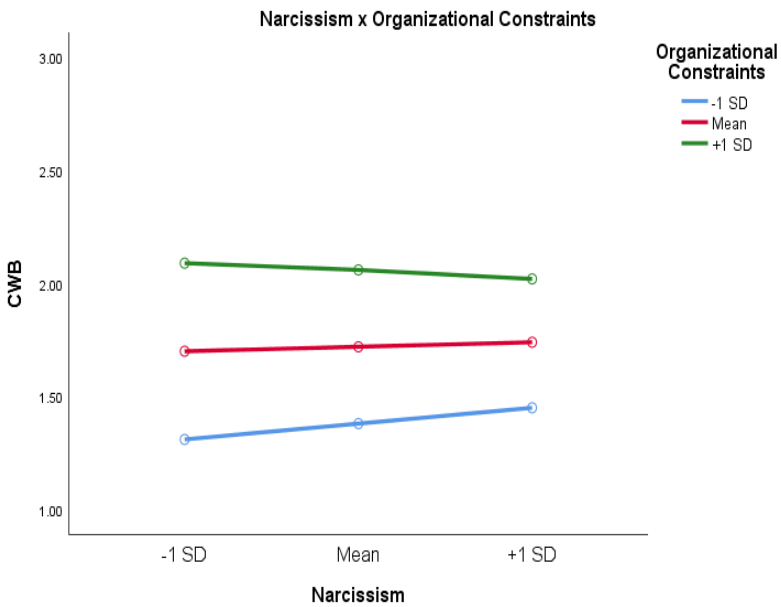
\*\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*  $p < 0.10$ .

**Figure 1***Interaction between Psychopathy and Adversity in Predicting CWB*

**Figure 2**  
*Interaction between Psychopathy and Deception in Predicting CWB*



**Figure 3**  
*Interaction between Narcissism and Organizational Constraints in Predicting CWB*



Moderated multiple regression results for restraint cues are presented in Table 4. As expected, most interaction terms were negative indicating that these moderators tend to suppress the DT. Psychopathy had a significant interaction with the situational strength facet of consistency ( $\beta = -.05, p < .10$ ) indicating the more consistent procedures are, the less likely it is for an individual high in psychopathy to engage in CWBs. Consistent with previous research, in-group collectivism was seen as a buffer for psychopathy ( $\beta = -.07, p < .05$ ) and Machiavellianism ( $\beta = -.07, p < .05$ ), indicating that the more collectivistic the culture at work is, the less likely it is for their DT traits to be activated and lead to CWBs. The interaction plots in Figures 4 and 5 indicate that psychopathic and Machiavellian traits were more likely to be activated in the presence of low IGC.

**Table 4**

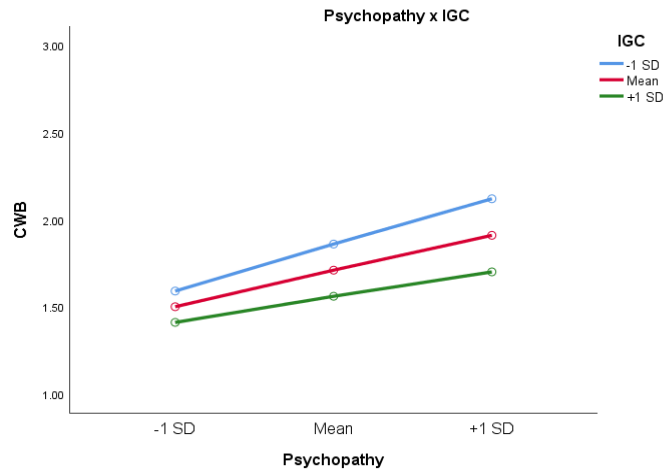
*Moderated Multiple Regression for Restraint Cues and Dark Triad in Predicting CWB*

Interaction	$\beta$	$R^2$
Narc x Duty	-.02	.02
Psych x Duty	-.03	.16
Mach x Duty	-.06	.13
Narc x Clarity	-.02	.12
Psych x Clarity	-.02	.22
Mach x Clarity	-.04	.36
Narc x Consistency	-.02	.17
Psych x Consistency	-.05*	.25
Mach x Consistency	-.04	.23
Narc x Consequences	-.04	.01
Psych x Consequences	-.05	.16
Mach x Consequences	-.03	.12
Narc x Constraints	-.01	.07
Psych x Constraints	.03	.20
Mach x Constraints	.03	.17
Narc x IGC	.00	.11
Psych x IGC	-.07**	.21
Mach x IGC	-.07**	.19
Narc x Ethical Leadership	-.00	.12
Psych x Ethical Leadership	-.04	.21
Mach x Ethical Leadership	-.01	.43

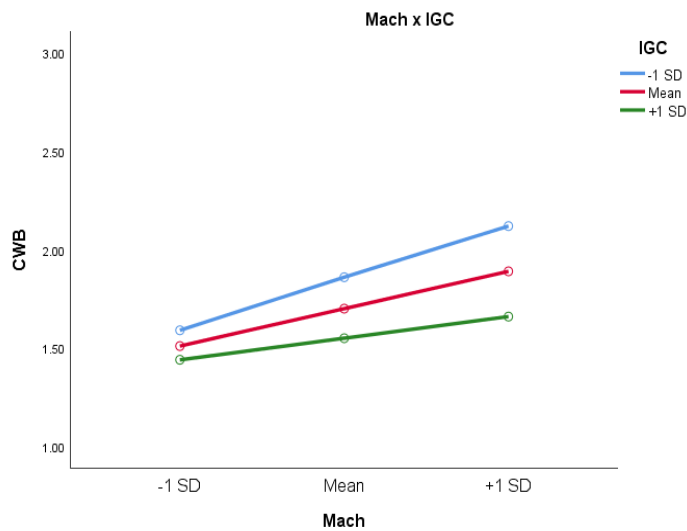
*Note.* Narc = Narcissism; Psych = Psychopathy; Mach = Machiavellianism, IGC = Ingroup Collectivism.

\*\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*  $p < 0.10$ .

**Figure 4**  
*Interaction between Psychopathy and IGC in Predicting CWB*



**Figure 5**  
*Interaction between Machiavellianism and IGC in Predicting CWB*



Moderated multiple regression results for regulation cues are presented in Table 5. As hypothesized, overall justice and perceived organizational support had negative interaction terms, although these interactions were not significant. Additionally, it was hypothesized that the interactions between the DT traits and negativity and burnout would be positive due to a *lack of*

regulation influencing the likelihood of DT traits' expression. This was supported for psychopathy and Machiavellianism but not narcissism. Significant interactions included psychopathy with negativity ( $\beta = .05, p < .10$ ) and burnout ( $\beta = .07, p < .05$ ), indicating that experiencing burnout and negativity at work may influence those high on psychopathy to act on their dark tendencies and engage in CWBs. As can be seen by Figure 6, individuals high in psychopathy were more likely to engage in CWBs when they were experiencing high levels of burnout.

**Table 5**

*Moderated Multiple Regression for Regulation Cues and Dark Triad in Predicting CWB*

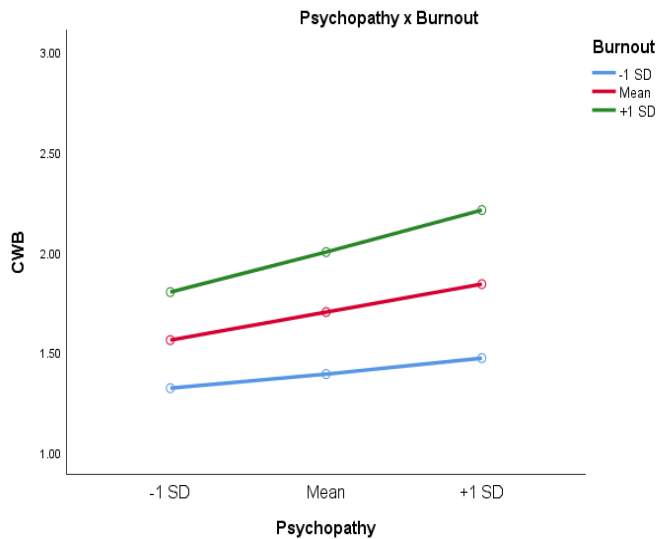
Interaction	$\beta$	$R^2$
Narc x Negativity	-.01	.22
Psych x Negativity	.05*	.29
Mach x Negativity	.01	.25
Narc x Burnout	-.01	.29
Psych x Burnout	.06**	.34
Mach x Burnout	.01	.20
Narc x Org Justice	-.01	.14
Psych x Org Justice	-.03	.23
Mach x Org Justice	-.02	.21
Narc x POS	-.02	.13
Psych x POS	-.03	.23
Mach x POS	-.02	.20

*Note.* Narc = Narcissism; Psych = Psychopathy; Mach = Machiavellianism.; POS = Perceived Organizational Support.  
 \*\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*  $p < 0.10$ .



**Figure 6**

*Interaction between Psychopathy and Burnout in Predicting CWB*

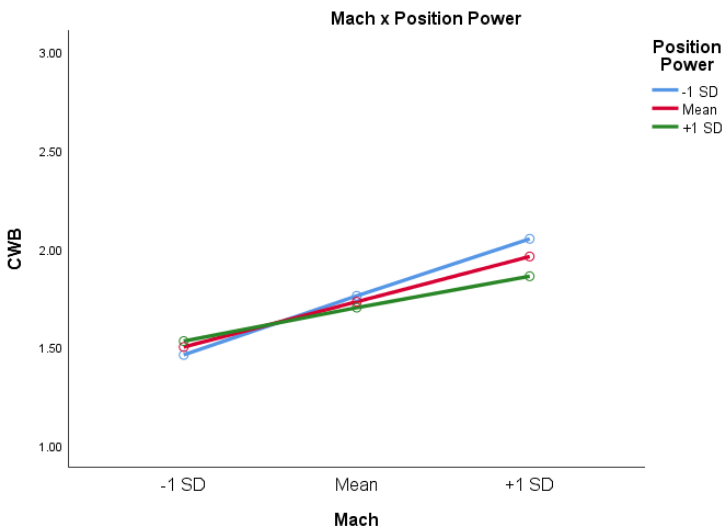


Moderated multiple regression results for resourcefulness cues are presented in Table 6. Results for this category are mixed, with several negative and positive interactions. Political skill and their facets were not found to be significant moderators of the relationship between DT and CWBs, although as expected, the interactions were negative suggesting that having political skill may have inhibitory effects on the DT. Significant interactions included psychopathy with aggression ( $\beta = .06, p < .10$ ), indicating individuals high on psychopathy who also have dispositional aggression are more likely to engage in CWBs. The interaction between Machiavellianism and position power was also significant ( $\beta = -.04, p < .05$ ) but negative, suggesting that as those high on Machiavellianism gain more power in their positions, they are less likely to engage in CWBs. Examining the interaction plots in Figure 7 reveals that those high in Machiavellianism who have little power in their positions are most likely to engage in CWBs. This is similar to the findings of O’Boyle, Forsyth., Banks, & McDaniel (2012) who found that psychopathy had a weaker relation to CWBs for workers in authority roles.

**Table 6***Moderated Multiple Regression for Resourcefulness Cues and Dark Triad in Predicting CWB*

Interaction	$\beta$	$R^2$
Narc x Political Skill	-.03	.07
Psych x Political Skill	-.00	.19
Mach x Political Skill	-.01	.15
Narc x Promotion-focus	-.03	.02
Psych x Promotion-focus	-.06	.18
Mach x Promotion-focus	-.04	.14
Narc x Aggression	.01	.26
Psych x Aggression	.06*	.28
Mach x Aggression	.02	.27
Narc x Position Power	-.01	.00
Psych x Position Power	-.01	.15
Mach x Position Power	-.04**	.13
Narc x Mastery	-.02	.09
Psych x Mastery	-.05	.19
Mach x Mastery	.00	.16

Note. Narc = Narcissism; Psych = Psychopathy; Mach = Machiavellianism  
 \*\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*  $p < 0.10$ .

**Figure 7***Interaction between Machiavellianism and Position Power in Predicting CWB*

## CHAPTER 5

### Discussion

#### Implications

Our findings reveal mixed support for our framework. Most interactions centered around psychopathy, an important finding considering the O’Boyle, Forsyth, Banks & McDaniel (2012) meta-analysis revealed that psychopathy had the weakest association with CWBs. The results of this study demonstrate that there are several moderators that can explain this weak association. In terms of relevance, psychopaths were more likely to engage in deviant behaviors in adverse and deceptive work settings – settings which provide supplementary environmental fit. This fits with evolutionary arguments that the Dark triad are adaptations to fit various environmental niches (Jonason et al., 2016; Penke et al., 2007). Additionally, it fits with our idea that adverse environments may “instigate” the DT, making them more likely to lash out and engage in CWBs. This is in line with Jones and Paulhus’ research (2010) which found that narcissists and psychopaths react aggressively when insulted or physically provoked (i.e. in adverse environments). Individuals high in psychopathy were also more likely to engage in CWBs in deceptive environments, demonstrating that environments that reward behaviors associated with the DT may also activate these dark tendencies in the DT. When mistrust and betrayal are present in environments, the DT are more likely to express these traits – possibly because this type of behavior is rewarded at these organizations.

Although previous research has shown that high organizational constraints weakened the association between narcissism and CWBs (Meurs, Fox, Kessler & Spector, 2013), our results show that high organizational constraints led to the highest engagement in CWBs regardless of how narcissistic the individual is. Additionally, although it was expected that high organizational constraints would activate the DT in individuals, our results demonstrated that the relationship

between narcissism and CWBs became stronger when organizational constraints were low. It is possible that having the resources available to do your job provides a more ambiguous, enterprising occupational environment for narcissists, allowing them more opportunities to engage in CWBs. Thus, *low* organizational constraints may actually act as an activator in the relationship between the DT and CWBs. This may be more in line with the theory behind situational strength where weak situations characterized by ambiguity allow for more variable trait-expression.

The last significant interactions in the relevance category involved Machiavellianism and psychopathy with income prospects. However, while it was hypothesized that income rise prospects would activate the DT and be more likely to lead to CWBs, the opposite effect was found. Although previous research has shown that the prospect of making more money at your job can activate psychopathic tendencies leading to CWBs (Blickle, Schutte & Genau (2018), it is possible the inability to make more money could be seen as a source of injustice to the DT. The finding that narcissists tend to keep their bad side in check when things were fair may be applied to this finding (Liu, et al., 2017). Individuals high in Machiavellianism and psychopathy may feel as if their inability to make more money at their jobs is a sign of poor treatment from the organization; they may not feel supported or treated fairly, thus making them lash out and engage in CWBs. Thus, instead of income rise prospects being viewed as an enterprising characteristic that activates the predatory orientations of employees, it is possible that the lack of income rise prospects is what activates the DT in individuals.

In terms of the restraint category, our results provided support for our “expectations” category of moderators –IGC and situational strength. Specifically, psychopathy had negative interactions with consistency and IGC, and Machiavellianism had significant interactions with

IGC. It was hypothesized that these external situational cues associated with strong expectations of behavior would be more likely to suppress the DT traits due to the restrictions on alternate behaviors. Consistency restricts the expression of personality differences by providing cues that uniformly indicate expected courses of actions through compatible information received from others that are consistent across time and don't contradict other guidelines in place (Meyer, Dalal & Hermida, 2010). Thus, when situations are characterized by high consistency, there is little room for an employee to show their personality traits – they are told exactly what is expected from them, from multiple people and through the various procedures and guidelines at place at work. By the same token, organizations with high levels of IGC expect loyalty to the organization and any violation of these values are likely not tolerated. Because of these expectations on behavior, the DT traits are suppressed, breaking the link to CWBs. Moderators in the obligation category may not be as influential in the DT because it has been shown that the DT are unconcerned with meeting social obligations and don't feel like they need to comply (Pan, Zhang, Teo & Lim, 2018). Thus, more importance should be given to moderators that involve expectations rather than obligations.

For the regulation category, the two moderators in the strain category – burnout and negativity – had significant interactions with psychopathy. No support was found for the social-exchange perspective regarding organizational justice and perceived organizational support, possibly because the DT's inherent disagreeableness makes them unlikely to care whether or not the organization is supportive or just. However, our results demonstrate that the DT's inability to self-regulate may play a role in whether or not they engage in counterproductive work behaviors. When experiencing burnout or in negative environments, individuals high in psychopathy are more likely to act on their dark tendencies – possibly because their self-regulatory capabilities

are depleted, leading them to act on their momentary urges. Although they may sometimes be able to control these impulses in order to appear to “get along” with others in order to “get ahead”, in times of stress, they are unlikely to do so.

For the resourcefulness category, psychopathy had significant positive interactions with dispositional aggression. An individual who is aggressive may have difficulty using their DT traits to their advantage – instead of masking their dark intentions, they are more motivated to act on their dark tendencies because they are naturally aggressive and hostile. Thus, their ability to package their motives as resourceful is overridden by their inherent aggression. Additionally, perceived position power had a significant but negative interaction with Machiavellianism. This suggests that as individuals high in Machiavellianism gain more power in their positions, they are less likely to engage in CWBs. This conflicts with our hypothesis and previous research that has shown that perceived position power strengthened the relationship between Machiavellianism and abusive supervision in work teams (Wisse & Sleebos, 2016). It is important to note that although abusive supervision and CWBs are conceptually similar, they are not the same – therefore, it is not surprising that individuals high in Machiavellianism who have more power may be more likely to lead to abusive supervision but not engagement in CWBs. Abusive supervisors may ridicule employees and fail to give them credit for jobs they complete (Tepper, 2000) but don’t necessarily have to engage in CWBs which involve theft, absenteeism, sabotage, etc. Our results show that individuals high in Machiavellianism who have little power in their positions are the most likely to engage in CWBs, similar to the findings of O’Boyle, Forsyth., Banks, & McDaniel (2012) who found that psychopathy had a weaker relation to CWBs for workers in authority roles. Thus, those in authority roles may be able to use their

power as a resource, making them able to mask their true intentions and get by without engaging in CWBs.

### **Limitations**

There are several limitations to this study to take note of. First, our data was collected using MTurk. Although the psychometric properties of MTurk responses to surveys has been validated in previous research (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011), the generalizability of this data may pose a problem. MTurk Data does not come from a truly random sample, as responses are provided by those who have already self-selected themselves into the Turker population (Stritch, Pederson & Taggart, 2017). Although Gilke et al., (2016) found that MTurkers were fairly diverse, they tend to be more male, white, and younger when compared to the U.S. adult population. Additionally, some of these workers may be motivated by compensation and are more likely to rush through the survey without paying attention to the questions. Although attention checks were utilized in order to exclude these participants, it is possible that MTurk workers are aware of these attention checks and know how to get around them in order to still receive their compensation even if they are not providing quality data.

Another limitation involves our use of self-report measures. Social desirability may have influenced participants' accuracy when responding to items on the DT and CWBs scales. Some items inquired about illegal or unethical behaviors, which may have deterred participants from accurately responding to these questions despite the researchers' assurance that all participant responses are anonymous and would be aggregated. When measuring sensitive information such as counterproductive work behaviors, supervisory ratings may be more reflective of individuals' true engagement in these behaviors.

Another limitation of this study includes the weaknesses involved with studying moderator variables. The search for moderators of relationships in the organizational sciences has often been debated, as studies investigating moderators often have low statistical power and small effect sizes (Murphy & Russell, 2017). Because of this, moderator effect estimates usually do not replicate well. However, this study has shown that some of the moderators reported in the literature did replicate. Thus, instead of ending the search for moderators, this study provides a stepping stone for other researchers by narrowing down the literature based on the different categories that were most supported in this study. Murphy and Russell (2017) argue that if the moderator effect sizes are small, “the onus on the investigator is to articulate why this small effect might reasonably be important”, without just claiming that the results are “theoretically important”. In terms of practical value, understanding how to deal with disruptive employees or counterproductive work behaviors could be of great benefit to organizations. By determining which situational or individualistic factors help restrain these employees from engaging in harmful behaviors, organizations can learn how to successfully cope with these employees and prevent it from harming their organization. For example, our results demonstrate that teaching employees how to self-regulate may help employees refrain from engaging in CWBs. We believe that examining these effect sizes, although small, provides useful information for organizations. Our intention with this framework is to help organize this search for moderators by determining which ones are most important. It is intended to help put an end to investigating moderators that are not replicable and do not have any true effects and to narrow down the predictors to a subset and use more robust analyses in the future. However, we do note that our sample size was smaller than desired, as the power to detect a conventionally small moderator effect is questionable if the sample size is under 500 (Murphy & Russell, 2017).



## **Future Research**

Future research can expand upon the 4R framework by testing if DT facets interact with distinct moderators. Table 1 can be used to examine the interactions between some of the moderators reported in the literature but not tested in this study. Moderators may then be classified into the appropriate categories – relevance, restraint, regulation and resourcefulness – based on these studies. Additionally, possible higher-order multiplicative effects can be examined, such as the effects when relevance is high and regulatory resources are low. Future research may also examine the DT as a whole instead of individual facets when investigating interactions with moderators. Additional analyses were conducted to determine if different interactions occurred if examining the DT as a composite. Some moderators, such as the social astuteness facet of political skill, were found to have significant interactions with the DT in predicting CWBs, although this moderator was not significant with any of the individual facets. Future research may consider these possibilities and determine if the results of this study still hold when examining the DT as a composite.

Additionally, moderators can be tested using an experimental/quasi-experimental design, which would provide a more credible estimate of the strength of the moderator effect (Murphy & Russell, 2017). For example, since adversity was a significant moderator, one may consider placing individuals in an environment where they are criticized for their work and determining if this influences their likelihood of engaging in some form of corruption. These individuals can complete self-report measures of the DT, making it possible to determine if adversity significantly moderates the relationship between the DT and some type of CWB.

Future research should also take into consideration narcissism and how it fits into this framework. Narcissism did not show a significant relationship with CWBs. Additionally,

interactions with narcissism and most of the moderators tested were negative, suggesting that this trait does not function the same way as Machiavellianism and psychopathy. Most interaction terms suggested that moderators were weakening the relationship between narcissists and CWBs. This may play an important role in understanding how narcissists behave at work. While those high in psychopathy and Machiavellianism are more impulsive, reckless and manipulative, narcissists' charming, glib personalities may make them very good at masking their true intentions, allowing them to both get along and get ahead, while not engaging in CWBs – at least not those captured by the scale. Future research should consider alternative sources of data such as supervisory ratings in order to get a clearer picture of how these individuals behave at work. Additionally, it could be beneficial to test both the interpersonal and organizational side of CWBs separately. It is likely that certain moderators may have differential effects on these different aspects of CWBs (i.e. interpersonal conflict may strengthen the relationship between the DT and CWB-I but not CWB-O).

## **Conclusions**

Although the DT and CWBs are conceptually linked, the relationship between them has been unclear. While several moderators of this relationship have been proposed, they have not been organized into a framework in order to see which ones matter the most in predicting CWBs. This study offers a conceptual framework in which moderators can be categorized based on their source and function. Specifically, this framework helps researchers determine when and in whom the DT is expressed or suppressed. The results of our study demonstrate mixed effects for the theories proposed with respect to CWB. Moderators that strengthened the relationship between the DT and CWB included instigators such as adversity, deceptive environments, strains such as burnout and negativity, and being inherently aggressive. Moderators that suppressed the

relationship between DT and CWB included expectations on workers such as consistent procedures and guidance and in-group collectivism, perceived position power, organizational constraints and income rise prospects. While psychopathy had the most significant interactions with several of the moderators tested, narcissism had only one significant interaction and was not correlated with CWBs. Additional studies should be conducted to determine how narcissism can better fit into this framework.

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