

The Impact of Destructive Leadership: Organizational Antecedents and Mediating Factors

Mock Dissertation Proposal
Dr. Quigley
ADS 820

Michelle Newlands
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Michelle Newlands

Superintendent of Student Well-Being and Achievement

I create the conditions for learning in classrooms that ensures identity and social location no longer predict outcomes for students.

I coach, mentor and support school administrators to ensure they become the courageous leaders our students need.



“Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”

James Baldwin

LEADERSHIP TRAINER * MENTOR * COACH

“Leaders don't create followers; they create more leaders.”



416-433-0907



M.A.Newlands@Outlook.com



MichelleNewlands.com



7549 Kallar Road, Niagara Falls, Ontario

Education

Doctor of Philosophy -PhD
Niagara University

2026

Supervisory Officer Qualification Papers
University of Toronto

2019

Masters of Education – MEd
University of Toronto

2008

Publications

Unlock Your Potential

Seven Steps to Eliminate Guessing

Awards

Canada's Outstanding Principal 2016

REALM Award for Equity Diversity and Inclusion 2023

Volunteer

Food4KidsWR

Board of Directors

September 2023- Present

CKWR Community Radio
Board of Directors

November 2024- Present

Languages

English
French

About Me

Currently I work as a Superintendent of Student Achievement and Well-Being with the Waterloo District School Board in Ontario, Canada

I have the opportunity to serve both students and school administrators. Primarily the focus of my work is to create better leaders. Leadership is second only to teaching in the impact on student outcomes.

As a school superintendent, I serve the interests of students by ensuring they have the best resources, the most capable teachers and an effective school leader with a vision and passion to ensure all staff and students reach their highest potential.

Work Experience:

Private School Inspector

Ministry of Education

2021 - 2023

- conduct inspections of private elementary and secondary schools in Ontario and overseas
- provide information and clarification on legislation, policies and requirements to private schools, school boards, and other stakeholders
- facilitate the implementation of new policies

Manager, Field Services

Ministry of Education

2018 - 2021

- Provide support and leadership to the sector in the implementation process of key ministry initiatives.
- Actively engage in the promotion of equity and inclusive practices in the implementation of the government's mandate.

Principal

• **Halton District School Board**

2012 - 2018

- Managed the day-to-day operations of elementary schools including the supervision and hiring of staff
- Developed a summer learning program which incorporated Indigenous principles of learning and funds of knowledge.

Vice-Principal

Toronto District School Board

2009 - 2012

- Supported the student learning and teacher professional development
- Authored a curriculum unit for the Afro-Centric school and the Elementary International Languages Program

Education Officer

Education Quality and Assessment Office (EQAO)

2003 - 2006

- Supported the student learning and teacher professional development
- Authored a curriculum unit for the Afro-Centric school and the Elementary International Languages Program

References

Scott Miller

Director of Education

Phone: 519-570-0003 Ext. 4241

Email: Scott_R_Miller@WRDSB.CA

Alison Gaymes San Vincente

Associate Director

Phone: 519-570-0003, Ext. 4231

Email: alison_gaymes@wrdsb.ca

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1. Introduction
2. Literature Review
3. Methodology

Abstract

A bad boss can create a toxic work environment that can have devastating effects on employees and cause health issues, and high turnover among staff. These negative outcomes which can have a financial impact on a company's profitability or tarnish the company's reputation and image compel researchers to not only explore issues of workplace bullying and mobbing but also find viable solutions. The present study has three objectives. First, it takes a step toward investigating whether leaders who report to a tyrannical or laissez-faire boss also utilize similar DLB in managing their own staff. Second what is the perception of racialized individuals on how their race intersects with supervisor relationships? In other words, are Black, Indigenous, people of colour (BIPOC) more likely to experience a boss with DLB than non-racialized individuals? Third are there characteristics or strategies that enable individuals to survive a bad boss? If so, what are they?

INTRODUCTION

“Be the leader you wish you had”.

The Boss

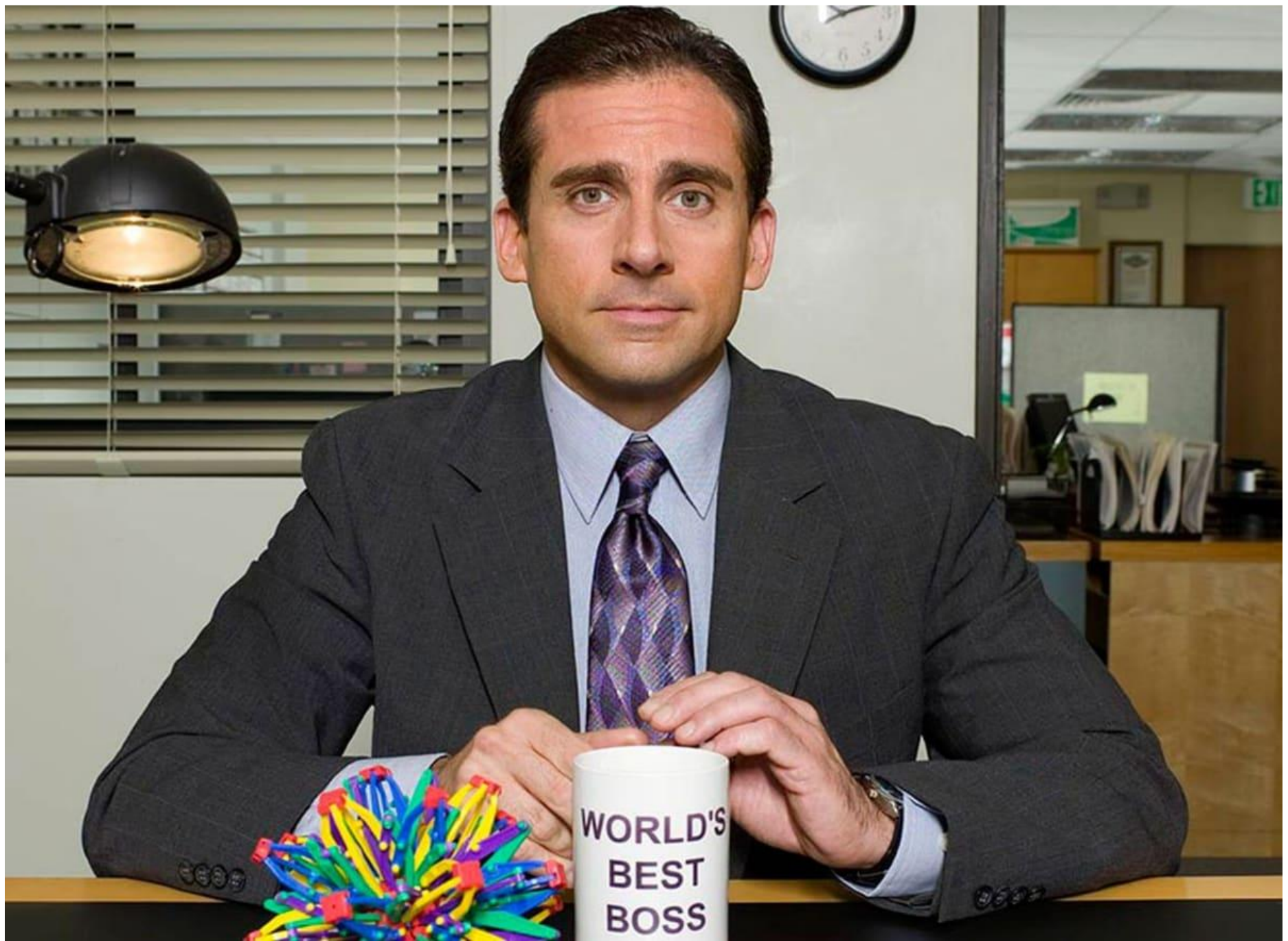
Leaders in any organization serve several key functions:

- support the achievement of organizational goals
- optimizing success through profits or achievement
- build or sustain the reputation of the organization
- lead staff

The Boss

Think of a boss you currently have or
have had in the past.

Who came to mind?



HORRIBLE BOSSSES



Bad Is Stronger Than Good

...[N]egative events will tend to have a greater impact on the individual than positive events of the same type, and good can only prevail over bad by superior force in numbers.

(Baumeister et al., 2001).

Review Article

Bad Is Stronger Than Good

A Review of the Models and Measures of Dark Personality

P. D. Harms

Management Department, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL, USA

Abstract: Organizational scholars increasingly realize the importance of a dark personality in the workplace. Although a great deal has been learned in terms of the utility of dark personality for the prediction of workplace outcomes, the field has yet to consolidate in terms of which models and measures best reflect the nature of dark personality traits. To facilitate this discussion, the present review examines and evaluates both established and emergent models and measures of dark personality. Further, to inform future research, it also summarizes evidence concerning methodological issues that have been shown to impact levels of dark traits or to moderate their relationships with work outcomes. Finally, the paper considers the implications of widespread practices in the field of dark personality and makes recommendations for future theorizing, research practices, and implementation.

Keywords: dark personality, dark triad, leadership, workplace deviance, personality measurement

Bad is stronger than good. That was the argument put forth in an influential article reviewing various psychological phenomena and finding a consistent pattern showing that humans are naturally attuned to pay attention to, learn from, and remember that which potentially threatens our existence (Baumeister et al., 2001). That same year, Robert and Joyce Hogan (2001) introduced the concept of "dark personality" to the field of organizational scholarship, prompting an explosion of scholarship dedicated to exploring the ways in which personality aberrations, "quirks," and pathologies impact workplace outcomes (see Gueonle, 2014; Schyns, 2015; Spain et al., 2014). These so-called dark traits (also referred to as subclinical traits or derailers) were thought to represent effective strategies for dealing with anxiety or advancing one's agenda in the short-term, but which would produce negative social consequences when they were displayed either too much or too long (Hogan & Hogan, 2001). It was also believed that these characteristics would be more likely to manifest themselves under certain circumstances, such as when individuals were under great stress (Spain et al., 2016), distracted, or relatively unconcerned about the impression they are making on others (Hogan et al., 2021; Kaiser & Hogan, 2007). Compared with predominant models of personality such as the "Big Five," dark traits have been argued to reflect rarer, often more sinister, and potentially more impactful characteristics which led to career derailment, terminations, conflict, lawsuits, and organizational failure.

The importance of dark personality in the workplace has largely been borne out by the accumulated evidence. Given the inherently negative nature of most dark personality traits, it should come as no surprise that the majority of

empirical research has shown that dark traits have, in general, negative relationships with positive work outcomes such as job performance (O'Boyle et al., 2012) and leadership effectiveness (Grijalva, Harms, et al., 2015; Landay et al., 2019) and positive relationships with negative work outcomes such as counterproductive work behaviors and toxic leadership (Grijalva & Newman, 2015; Harms et al., 2018). Studies examining the predictive validity of dark traits over the Big Five have reliably found evidence of incremental validity (e.g., Harms, Spain, Hannah, Hogan, et al., 2011; O'Boyle et al., 2012; Pletzer et al., 2019). Dark traits have also been linked to more specific aspects of workplace behaviors, such as performance on job interviews, vocational choices, creative tasks, sales performance, and safety behaviors (Puntham & Sherman, 2021; Goncalo et al., 2010; Hirschfeld & Van Scotter, 2019; Paulhus et al., 2013; Soyer et al., 1999; Wisse et al., 2015) as well as conflict and performance on teams (Baysinger et al., 2014).

Beyond the effects of dark personality in organizational behavior and leadership, several studies have also pointed to dark traits (frequently narcissism) as having an impact at a strategic level when such traits are exhibited by CEOs or top management team members (e.g., Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007; Cragg et al., 2020; Van Scotter & De Dreu, 2020). Similarly, entrepreneurship scholars have begun to embrace dark personality traits as potentially a key for understanding the reasons why some people feel uncomfortable in normal job settings, take risks to start new enterprises, and also as a reason why new ventures may fail (Klotz & Neubaum, 2016; Wiklund et al., 2018).

Both the rapidly expanding and fractured nature of the literature concerning the role of dark personality in the

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Bad Is Stronger Than Good

Roy F. Baumeister and Ellen Bratslavsky
Case Western Reserve University

Catrin Finkenauer
Free University of Amsterdam

Kathleen D. Vohs
Case Western Reserve University

The greater power of bad events over good ones is found in everyday events, major life events (e.g., trauma), close relationship outcomes, social network patterns, interpersonal interactions, and learning processes. Bad emotions, bad parents, and bad feedback have more impact than good ones, and bad information is processed more thoroughly than good. The self is more motivated to avoid bad self-definitions than to pursue good ones. Bad impressions and bad stereotypes are quicker to form and more resistant to disconfirmation than good ones. Various explanations such as diagnosticity and salience help explain some findings, but the greater power of bad events is still found when such variables are controlled. Hardly any exceptions (indicating greater power of good) can be found. Taken together, these findings suggest that bad is stronger than good, as a general principle across a broad range of psychological phenomena.

Centuries of literary efforts and religious thought have depicted human life in terms of a struggle between good and bad forces. At the metaphysical level, evil gods or devils are the opponents of the divine forces of creation and harmony. At the individual level, temptation and destructive instincts battle against strivings for virtue, altruism, and fulfillment. "Good" and "bad" are among the first words and concepts learned by children (and even by house pets), and most people can readily characterize almost any experience, emotion, or outcome as good or bad.

What form does this eternal conflict take in psychology? The purpose of this article is to review evidence pertaining to the general hy-

pothesis that bad is stronger than good (see also Rozin & Royzman, in press). That is, events that are negatively valenced (e.g., losing money, being abandoned by friends, and receiving criticism) will have a greater impact on the individual than positively valenced events of the same type (e.g., winning money, gaining friends, and receiving praise). This is not to say that bad will always triumph over good, spelling doom and misery for the human race. Rather, good may prevail over bad by superior force of numbers: Many good events can overcome the psychological effects of a single bad one. When equal measures of good and bad are present, however, the psychological effects of bad ones outweigh those of the good ones. This may in fact be a general principle or law of psychological phenomena, possibly reflecting the innate predispositions of the psyche or at least reflecting the almost inevitable adaptation of each individual to the exigencies of daily life.

This pattern has already been recognized in certain research domains. This is probably most true in the field of impression formation, in which the *positive-negative asymmetry effect* has been repeatedly confirmed (e.g., Anderson, 1965; Peeters & Czapinski, 1990; Skowronski & Carlston, 1989). In general, and apart from a few carefully crafted exceptions, negative information receives more processing and contrib-

The Boss As Leader

Positive Characteristics/Traits

Influence

Goal Attainment

Six Leadership Styles by Daniel Goleman

USE AS MANY OF THESE STYLES AS POSSIBLE DEPENDING ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES!

Be extra careful with Commanding and Pacesetting leadership!

COMMANDING LEADERSHIP

Also known as Directive or Coercive, this style is about telling people what to do and when to do it.

COACHING LEADERSHIP

Coaching team members to develop themselves to become better individuals and professionals.

AFFILIATIVE LEADERSHIP

Growing personal bonds and striving towards team well-being. Focus on harmony rather than results.

VISIONARY LEADERSHIP

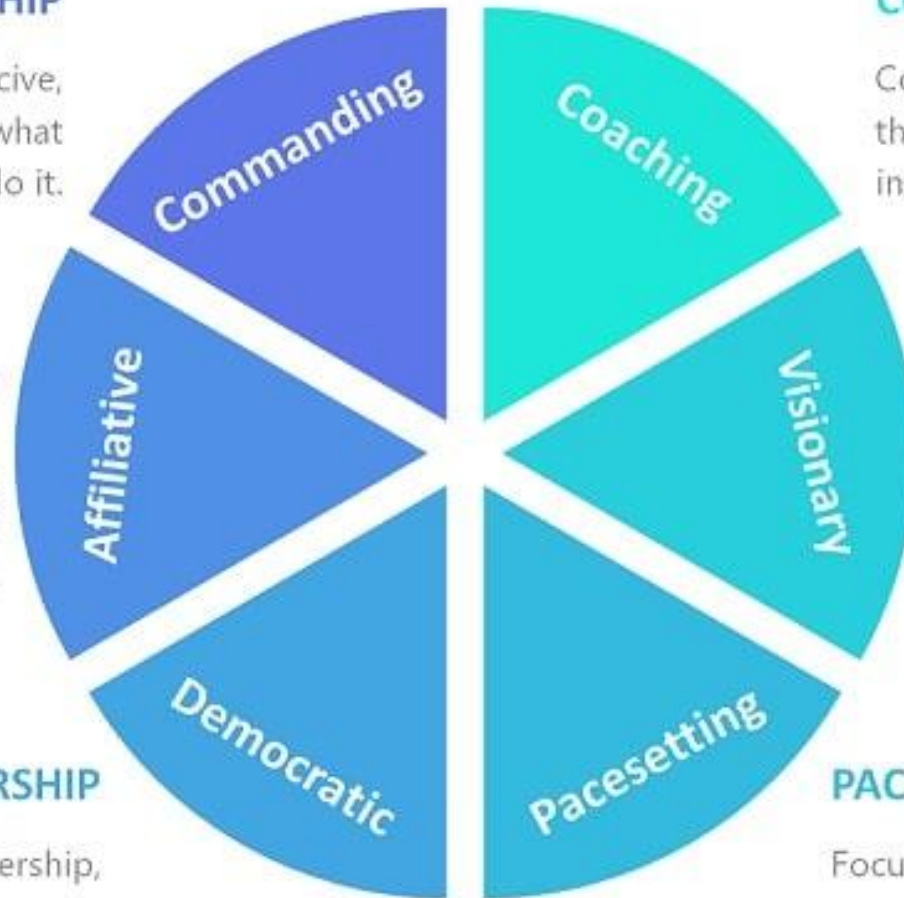
Built on inspiring and motivating people to pursue a long-term vision.

DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP

Also known as Participative leadership, this style is about working together through dialogue and seeking consensus.

PACESETTING LEADERSHIP

Focused on performance and results. Leader act as a role model for others to follow. Excellent output is required.



THE
DEVIL
WEARS
PRADA



The Dark Side of Leadership



Key Term:

Destructive Leadership

Destructive leadership, can be defined as “the systematic and repeated behavior by a leader, supervisor or manager that violates the legitimate interest of the organization by undermining and/or sabotaging the organization’s goals, tasks, resources and effectiveness and/or the motivation, well-being or job satisfaction of subordinates.”

Einarsen et. al., 2007



The Boss

Do you remember something a destructive leader did to you, a friend or a colleague?

Key Term

Abusive Supervision

Bennett Tepper, an organizational psychologist completed some of the earliest (2000) research in the field of **abusive supervision** which can be defined as subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact (Tepper et al., 2007). Abusive supervision has been linked to reduced job satisfaction, turnover intentions emotional stress and psychological distress (Aryee et al., 2007).

Abusive Supervision
is common with prevalence
rates ranging
in
organizations

ffrom

10 – 30%



Toxic leadership in education presents a grave problem that profoundly impacts employee performance. Teachers and staff subjected to toxic leadership often experience stress, burnout, and reduced job satisfaction

(Dahlan et al., 2024)

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(Dahlan et al., 2024)



Abusive Supervision

The vast majority of individuals who seek out Employee Assistant Programs (EAP) report bullying from superiors (Ferris, 2009).

Impact of Destructive Leadership

Damage to the Organization

- Loss in profit
- Reputational risk
- Increased cost
- Failure in goal attainment
- Loss in competitive positioning

Damage to Employees

- Stress and burnout
- Poor job performance
- Decrease in job satisfaction
- High turnover rate
- Suicide

Statement of the Problem

Almost everyone in the workplace who is over the age of 18 has experienced the unpleasant working condition of having a bad boss or being bullied or mobbed by coworkers.

84% of employees are affected in some manner by workplace bullying.

(Treadway et al., 2013)

Workplace bullying and mobbing are associated with negative impacts such as high levels of stress, decreased job satisfaction and reduced commitment to the job.

(Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018, as cited in Adeniyi, 2024)

Statement of the Problem

VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity) world and the emerging post-Covid 'new normal'. This has made aspects of the dark side of leadership such as abusive supervision a matter of greater concern for organizations across the globe.

(Goute & Gout, 2021)).

Statement of the Problem Continued

Even when the experience with a destructive boss was short lived and in the distant past there is long-term impact on employees (Li et al., 2023).

Despite the considerable advancements in the field of abusive supervision and destructive leadership (DL) over the last decade, there still remains insufficient knowledge and understanding of how DL operates in diverse work environments among well-educated leaders and followers.

Key Term:

Workplace Bullying

Long running and repeated, targeted towards one or more individuals, motivated by a direct intent to harm and based in the power the bullies have over the target (Day et al., 2024)

Psychological harassment that involves offending or socially excluding someone. Bullying can occur at an organizational level where organizational practices or procedures are oppressive, demeaning, humiliating, and victimizing. (Ferris, 2009)

Key Term

Mobbing

Leymann applied mobbing to the behavior of adults

This behavior is characterized by psychological attacks

Psychological aggression that often involves a group of mobbers

(Zapf, 1999)

Mobbing

- Harmfull psychological behaviors
- Used by Germanic and Nordic researchers
- Solitary perpetrator

Workplace Bullying

- Harmfull psychological behaviors
- Used by English researchers
- Multiple perpetrators



Key Terms:

Incivility

Low level actions diffused across individuals and situations composed of broad-based rudeness or inconsideration not related to power (Day et al., 2024)

Harassment

Actions which occur in a legal framework and assumes targets are mistreated because of their protected status.
(Day et al., 2024)

Key Term:

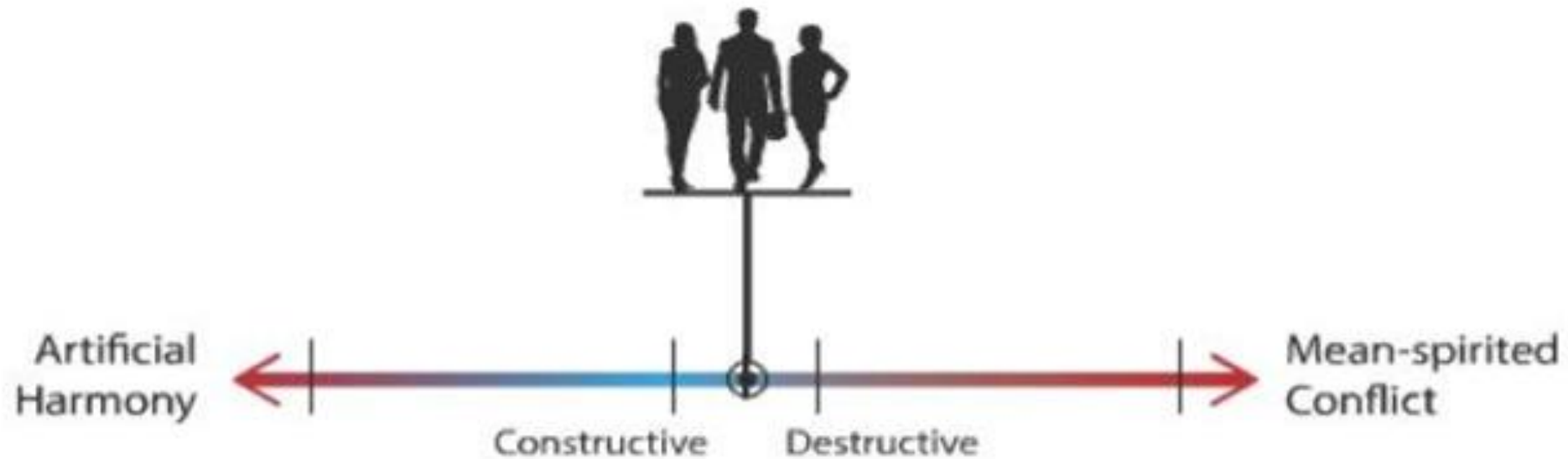
Destructive Leadership

Destructive leadership, can be defined as “the systematic and repeated behavior by a leader, supervisor or manager that violates the legitimate interest of the organization by undermining and/or sabotaging the organization’s goals, tasks, resources and effectiveness and/or the motivation, well-being or job satisfaction of subordinates.”

Einarsen et. al., 2007



THE CONFLICT CONTINUUM



Despite lawsuits and lobbying,
bullying remains ubiquitous in the workplace.

(Feris, 2009)



Purpose of the Study

1

Determine whether leaders who report to a tyrannical or laissez-faire boss also utilize similar DLB in managing their own staff.

2

Examines the intersection of identity on experiences with destructive leaders.

3

Identify characteristics, actions or strategies that enable individuals that mediate the impact of a destructive leader.

Purpose of the Study

No one sets out to become a terrible boss yet having a horrible boss seems unavoidable.

Knowing how to moderate the impact of such destructive leaders is invaluable. Followers need tools to survive the experience without replicating the behaviors in their own leadership practice.

This research has the potential to create better bosses and in doing so, create more humane and nurturing work environments where everyone can not only survive but also thrive.

Purpose of the Study

We cannot study good leadership without studying the pathogenesis of bad leadership

(Kellerman, 2005)

Research Questions

1

Do individuals in leadership roles who have a tyrannical or laissez-faire boss utilize similar DLB in managing their own staff?

2

Are racialized leaders more likely to view their boss a destructive leader than their non-racialized colleagues?

3

What moderating factors allow employees to not only survive but thrive under a bad boss?

LITERATURE REVIEW

*“With power comes the abuse of power.
And where there are bosses, there are crazy bosses.
It's nothing new.”*

Literature Review

Workplace bullying

Consistent negative behavior over a period of time

Set boundaries, be assertive, name the behaviour, commit the employer to act

Workplace mobbing

Outright hostility behaviors, isolation, attacks

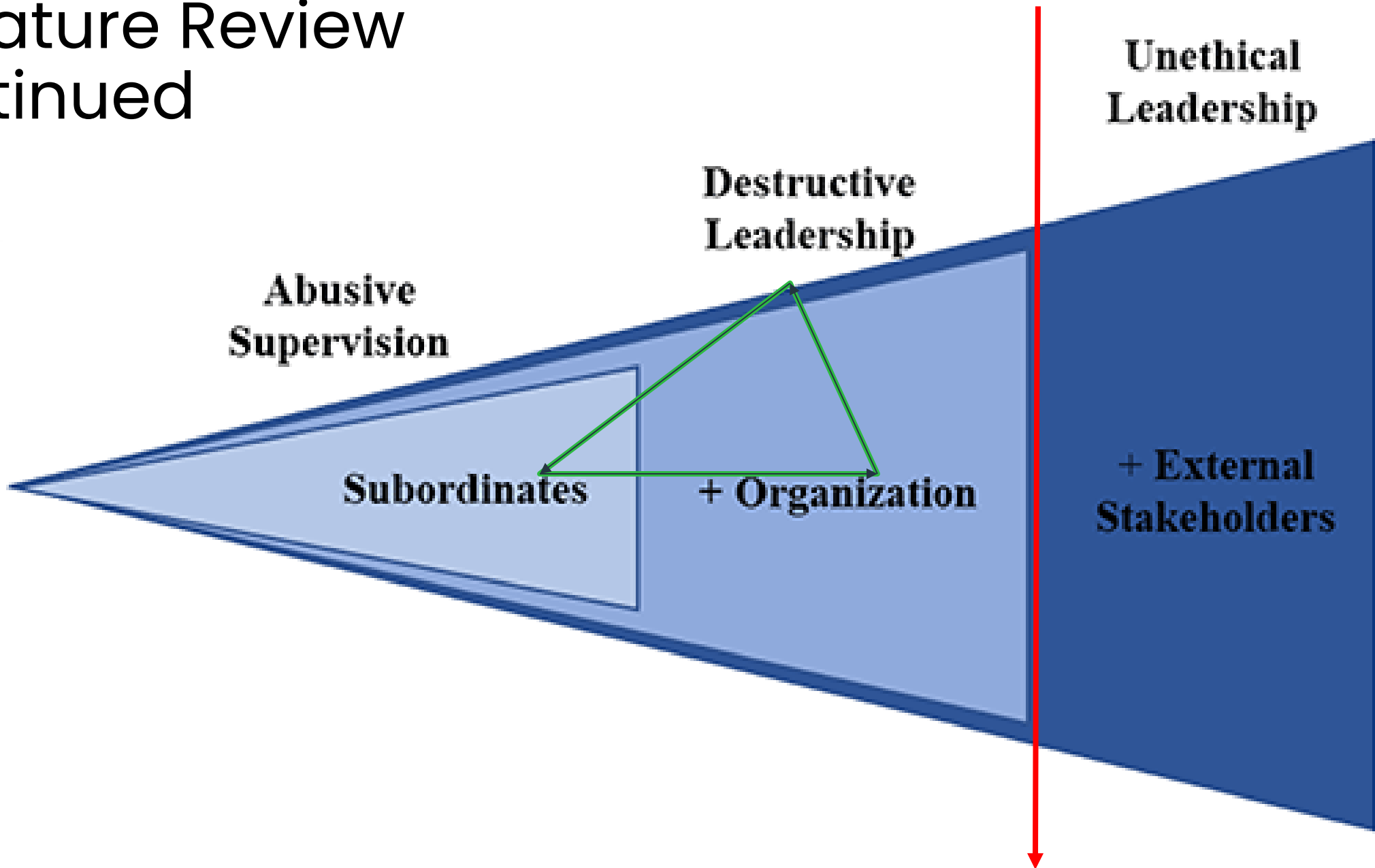
Set boundaries, practice self-care, find a new job altogether

Abusive supervision

Sustained hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors

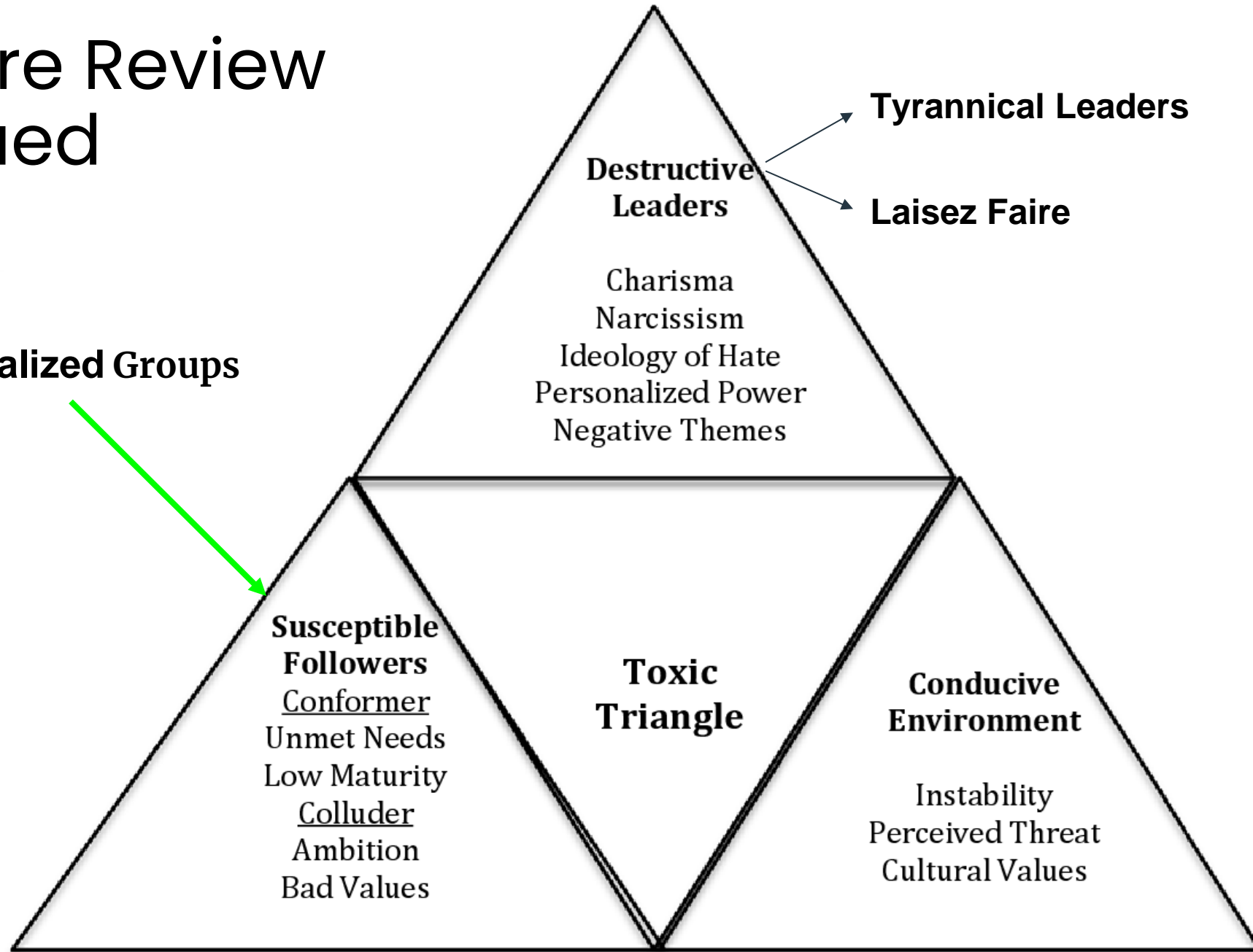
Set boundaries, commit to a healthy organisational culture, demand organizational justice

Literature Review Continued



Literature Review Continued

Marginalized Groups



Research Questions

1

Do individuals in leadership roles who have a tyrannical or laissez-faire boss utilize similar DLB in managing their own staff?

2

Are racialized leaders more likely to view their boss a destructive leader than their non-racialized colleagues?

3

What moderating factors allow employees to not only survive but thrive under a bad boss?

METHODOLOGY

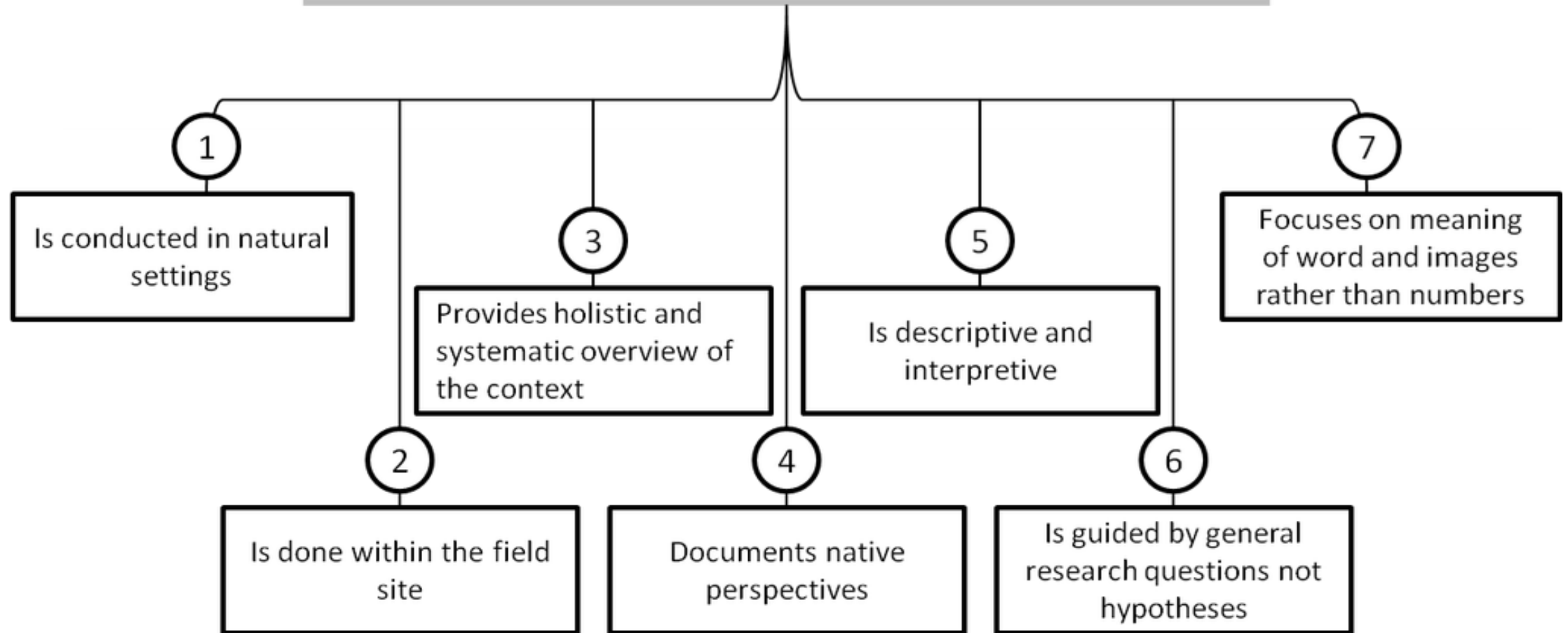
“Understandng and preventing destructive leadership may be as important or even more imporant than understanding and enhacing positive aspects of leadership.”

Method

Research Design

In order to examine how a bad boss impacts leaders and workers in an organization an ethnographic study will be conducted since it offers the opportunity to study the culture (Lune & Berg, 2017) of an organization and the role of the leader in that organization. For the purposes of this study the researcher is part of the group of leaders being studied and apart from the group simultaneously. A micro-ethnographic study will be utilized to examine school leaders across different districts rather than all leaders (macro) in the educational system. The goal is to examine the social discourse at play between a school leader and their staff and the same leader and their superior. Examining the outcomes of such social interactions allows for identifying the underlying principles and concepts at play. This investigation will utilize analytic ethnography, coined by Lofland and described in *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*, (Lune & Berg, 2017, p.98) with an aim to: (a) *provide generic propositional answers to questions about social life (leadership behavior) and organization;* (b) *pursue such an attempt in a spirit of unfettered or naturalistic inquiry;*(c) *utilize data based on deep familiarity with a social setting (school leadership) or situation that is gained by personal participation or an approximation of it;* (d) *develop the generic propositional analysis over the course of doing research;* (e) *present data and analyses that are true;* (f) *provide data and/or analyses that are new;* and (g) *present an analysis that is developed in the senses of being conceptually elaborated, descriptively detailed and concept data interpenetrated.*

7 Characteristics of Ethnographic Research



Method

Study Participants

Ideally participants should be public school elementary or secondary school principals who are recently or partially retired. The study would be open to principals from Catholic and French districts principals. Ideally participants should reflect the ethnic fabric of society as well as various social identities in order to make inferences from the small sample size generalizable to the larger population of school leaders. Although probability sampling would ensure that mathematically subgroups of the principal population will be representative, it may be more beneficial to have principals participate rather than to require that those who participate meet some defined criteria that individuals might prefer to keep hidden such as sexual orientation, gender identity, religion or ability.

Method

Participant Recruitment

Participants will need to have work experience with more than one boss and be willing to answer interview questions about a previous boss who they would characterize as “bad”. The bad boss should meet the general description of a destructive leader boss: an individual who damages the reputation of the organization, engages in corruption, fraud, bullying, manipulation, immorality and so on (Lu, et. al., 2012). Participants might identify their boss as a bully since bullies often leverage the fear and intimidation of their behavior to achieve their personal goals and improve their job performance (Treadway, et. al., 2013).

Data Collection

Method

Ideally for research that requires interviews for data collection, a large robust sample size of 30 participants would be most advantageous. Since interviews are being conducted the researcher has to factor in individuals who begin the process but do not complete the interview(s) for whatever reason. A reasonable buffer against unexpected attrition might be a 20% overage. Therefore if the intent is to have 30 completed interviews it might be best for the researcher to interview between 36 and 40 individuals.

Convenience Sampling could be used by offering all retiring principals the opportunity to engage in a survey. Currently the Retired Teachers of Ontario (RTO) invite individuals planning a retirement to complete various surveys. An invitation to participate in this study could be added to the RTO website with information on the study and researcher contact information. In addition, the Ontario Teachers Pension Plan is another source for recruiting candidates for the study. OTPP has an announcement page where the study could be described along with contact information for the researcher.

Snowballing might also be used to target a small group of retired professionals such as the Ontario Retired Teachers' Association. Each participant would be encouraged to "invite a friend" to participate in the study and thus grow the sample size with individuals who are likely to have common traits and profiles.

Finally, participants might be recruited from an open Facebook Group titled: *Tell Me About Your Horrible Boss*. Participants joining the group would be asked to complete demographic information such as administrative category, years as an administrator and the number of supervisors (superintendents) who were direct reports. Each participant would be interviewed as part of the study.

References



QUESTIONS?