

I'm Number One! Does Narcissism Impair Ethical Judgment Even for the Highly Religious?

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Abstract Can an assessment of individuals' narcissism help explain the quality of a respondent's ethical judgment? How is the relationship between religiosity and ethical judgment moderated by the effects of narcissism? With a sample of 385 undergraduate business majors, this study uses a taxonomic approach to examine the effects of intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity as well as orthodox Christian beliefs on ethical judgment. Three distinct clusters were identified: Skeptics, Nominals, and Devouts. Surprisingly, of the three clusters, Nominals and Devouts were the only groups impacted by narcissism, although Skeptics overall demonstrate the worst ethical judgment.

Keywords Narcissism · Ethical judgment · Orthodox beliefs · Religiosity · Cluster analysis

Introduction

As many of the world's religions present a set of moral and ethical guidelines to adherents, most people intuitively believe that there is a relationship between religiosity and ethical judgment (cf., Drane 1976; Miller 1999; Weaver and Agle 2002). Although this link is only in the early stages of exploration with relatively few studies pertaining to religiosity's impact on business ethics (Weaver and Agle 2002), some interesting findings already are apparent (cf., Vitell 2009). In general, religiosity appears to affect ethical

judgment, but the precise nature of this relationship is still emerging.

One of the most pressing questions with respect to religiosity and ethics is why some people who evince high levels of religiosity and commitment also commit acts of egregiously unethical behavior, such as exploiting the underprivileged (e.g., Andaya 2010; Razu 2006) or engaging in illicit sexual behavior (e.g., Groome 2011; Smyntek 2006). Although some posit no relationship between religiousness and moral reasoning—notably, Kohlberg (1984)—the weight of the evidence suggests otherwise (cf., Vitell 2009). Thus, the pursuit of additional personal characteristics that moderate the effects of religiosity on ethical judgment is warranted.

Narcissism is a human personality trait that shows promise in partially explaining individuals' departure from solid ethical judgment. Narcissists tend to ignore the rules that govern the behavior of others (Rosenthal and Pittinsky 2006), to attain personal goals at the expense of others (Glad 2002), and to be insensitive to what society expects of them in terms of conformity to its norms (Kramer 2003). Therefore, it is reasonable to hypothesize that even though an individual's religious commitment would logically preclude unethical behavior, a person might be seduced by his or her own narcissism into engaging in acts that are unethical and possibly illegal.

This study contributes to the body of knowledge on religiosity and ethical judgment in the following important ways: (1) a typology of three clusters is presented, each of which reflects a different degree of commitment to the historically orthodox theology of the Christian religion; (2) the cluster parameters include measures of both intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity; (3) the cluster parameters also include subjects' adherence to orthodox Christian beliefs, thus taking into account the lack of congruency across

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respondents with respect to the content of their faith; and (4) the effect of narcissism on those who are marginal or non-adherents, moderate adherents, and highly committed adherents to the Christian religion is explored.

Religiosity and Ethical Judgment

A number of authors recognize the importance of religion in influencing ethical judgment as well as ethical intentions and behavior (cf., Ji 2004; McDaniel and Burnett 1990; Vitell 2009; Vitell and Paolillo 2003). Several studies find that subjects who exhibit higher levels of religiosity are also more likely to identify questionable behaviors as unethical (e.g., Kennedy and Lawton 1998; Rashid and Ibrahim 2008; Singhapakdi et al. 2000; Vitell et al. 2005, 2006). Bloodgood et al. (2008) successfully demonstrate the effect of frequency of worship service attendance on student cheating. Peterson et al. (2010) use a single-item self-reporting question querying the extent that respondents consider themselves to be religious. In this study, the degree of religiosity is statistically significant but explains only a negligible percentage of the variance in business ethicality.

One of the most widely used instruments is derived from Allport and Ross's (1967) Scale of Religious Orientation (SRO), which examines both intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity. One who is extrinsically motivated toward religious actions does so primarily to use religion to satisfy his or her own ends, whereas a person who is intrinsically motivated approaches religion as a way of life, because its values have become internalized (Allport and Ross 1967). The extrinsic scale subdivides into two distinct dimensions (Kirkpatrick 1988). "Ep" designates items that allude to religiosity motivated by personal reasons, while "Es" stands for items that represent social motivation for religious involvement.

Vitell et al. (2005), using both extrinsic and intrinsic adaptations of SRO to assess the impact of religiosity on consumer ethics, finds that intrinsic religiousness, but not extrinsic religiousness, is a determinant of consumer ethical beliefs. This finding is replicated in a subsequent study (Vitell et al. 2006). Vitell et al. (2007) also find that extrinsic and intrinsic religiosity are both linked to consumers' ethical beliefs, along with subjects' money ethic and attitude toward business.

Even though a number of studies support a positive relationship between religious adherence and ethical judgment, the results of research into this provocative topic are equivocal. For example, Hegarty and Sims' (1979) study of graduate students' ethical decision-making finds no effects of religious values. Kidwell et al. (1987), assessing the effects of religious preference and frequency

of church attendance on ethical perceptions, find no significant effects of religious preference or frequency of church attendance on managers' perceptions of ethical situations. Conroy and Emerson (2004), using merely church attendance as a surrogate for religious commitment, find partial support for an effect of religiosity on ethical judgments. Also, Kurpis et al. (2008) fail to find support for their hypothesis that religiosity is positively related to the recognition of ethical problems; although they do find partial support that religiosity is positively related to ethical behavioral intentions. In one study (Keller et al. 2007), religiosity is determined by asking respondents which standard they use to make ethical decisions—utilitarian, egoistic, religious, deontological, hermeneutics, or amoral—where religiosity is the dominant model of ethical decision-making. Therefore, in spite of a promising beginning, additional work on the relationship between religiosity and business ethics is warranted. Moreover, results from studies to date suggest that religiosity is best represented by an instrument that captures both intrinsic and extrinsic religious commitment.

Orthodox Christian Belief

In addition to equivocal findings with respect to the influence of religiosity on business ethics, religiosity as a concept is under-defined in studies in that it is often treated as if the *content* of religious belief and commitment were of little relevance to the study. On the contrary, it is likely that commitment to one set of religious beliefs produces dramatically different behaviors compared to an equivalent level of commitment to a different set of religious beliefs. Even Allport and Ross's (1967) SRO that differentiates intrinsic from extrinsic religious orientation fails to specify the content of the theological persuasion to which subjects adhere. In this study, we specifically examine the influence of orthodox Christian beliefs on ethical judgment.

According to Fullerton and Hunsberger (1982, p. 318), religious orthodoxy is "the acceptance of well-defined, central tenets of" a given religion. Orthodox Christian beliefs have been found to influence a variety of human attitudes and behaviors. For example, older adolescents report significantly less permissive sexual attitudes among those who adhere to orthodox beliefs (Fehring et al. 1998). Ji et al. (2011) find that youth who espouse orthodox Christian beliefs report less depression and less ideation of suicide than others. Similarly, Watson et al. (1988) also find orthodox beliefs to be correlated with less depression and less narcissistic exploitation of others. Moreover, Broughton (1975) finds that the certainty of orthodox Christian belief itself influences religiosity among subjects. Thus, the content of religious belief—its theology—and

not merely religious commitment in and of itself, shows promise in explaining some variation in behavior patterns (cf., Donahue 1989).

For this study, it is important to identify the religious persuasion posited to underlie ethical judgment as well as the degree to which respondents adhere to the recognized tenets of the religion of interest. One would be remiss to uncritically assume that all religious belief systems are equally efficacious in affecting ethical judgment; that the decision rules employed under various belief systems would have consistent results; and that only the magnitude of commitment to religion in general is at issue. For these reasons, a scale of Christian orthodoxy is employed, though future studies could similarly examine the ethical impact of various other religious traditions.

Narcissism

The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, DSM-IV, published by the American Psychiatric Association (2000), defines narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) as someone whose behavior is fittingly described by five of nine characteristics. These include: (1) an exaggerated sense of self-importance; (2) fantasies of extraordinary success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love; (3) belief that one is “special” and should only associate with and can only be understood by other high-status people; (4) demand for excessive admiration from others; (5) a sense of entitlement; (6) objectification of others to achieve personal ends and gratification; (7) lack of empathy; (8) envy of others or belief that others are envious of oneself; (9) haughty, arrogant, patronizing, or contemptuous behavior or attitudes toward others. However, narcissistic behaviors appear to constitute a continuum ranging from mild to severe; thus a somewhat more nuanced approach to diagnosis will be taken in the proposed revisions for the upcoming DSM-V (<http://www.dsm5.org/ProposedRevisions/Pages/proposedrevision.aspx?rid=19>).

Some studies involving narcissism deal exclusively with clinical populations. For example, perpetrators of domestic violence evidence narcissistic tendencies varying from subclinical to full-blown psychopathology (Rothschild et al. 1997). However, more work focuses on narcissism in sub-clinical populations. Even without manifestations of outright psychopathology, narcissists' behavior is notable for its negative impact on those with whom narcissists interact. For example, narcissism is positively associated with having multiple sexual affairs along with higher numbers of partners cheated on (Hunyady et al. 2008). Moreover, narcissists show higher levels of aggression toward others and are more likely than non-narcissists to perpetrate unprovoked aggression against colleagues (Reidy et al. 2010).

In organizational settings, narcissists tend to point out their high achievements, which in turn garners them support and power (Goldman 2009, pp. 30–54). In fact, what appears to be high performance in the short-term often gives way to long-term problems, masked by expedient actions undertaken by the narcissist in order to appear successful (Campbell et al. 2005). Narcissists, therefore, may make good impressions early in the relationship, but they tend to wear out their welcome in the long run. For this reason, colleagues often reverse their early positive attitudes (Paulhus 1998).

Narcissists as managers lack listening skills and the ability to focus in order to find orderly solutions to business problems (Maccoby 2004). They tend to be impatient with the details and easily distracted. In addition, they are quick to point out others' faults but are incapable of true empathy and slow to contribute positive input unless it relates to their own performance.

As narcissists' perspectives are self-focused, they have difficulty getting along with others and can be extremely sensitive to any criticism or challenge to their authority (Campbell et al. 2004). For similar reasons, they hold grudges until they can exact retribution for even the smallest slights (Downs 1997, pp. 37–42). The enigma of narcissism is that although narcissists have extraordinarily inflated egos, they are also extremely sensitive to criticism.

In addition to a multitude of other dysfunctional behaviors, narcissists have a tendency to be more unethical than others. For example, narcissism is one predictor of white-collar crime in business (Blickle et al. 2006). Narcissism is also associated with being comfortable engaging in ethically questionable sales behaviors, although narcissism is not correlated with sales achievement or performance (Soyer et al. 1999). In addition, Penney and Spector (2002) find that narcissism is a moderator of subjects' counterproductive work behaviors, including unethical actions, with those higher in narcissism willing to engage in significantly more negative behavior.

Campbell et al. (2005), in an experiment with a renewable forest, find that narcissists harvest more timber than the non-narcissists, but in the process they deplete what was to be a long-term natural resource. By putting their own acquisitiveness ahead of the greater good, these narcissists' short-term achievement effectively destroys the long-term viability of an important resource. Thus, research substantiates the notion that narcissists will engage in self-aggrandizing behavior at the expense of colleagues and at the expense of the organization or community as a whole.

The questions we address herein are threefold. First, what is the impact of intrinsic and extrinsic (both personal and social) religiosity on ethical judgment? What is the effect of commitment to Christian orthodoxy on ethical

judgment? And, importantly, how are the effects of religiosity and orthodoxy on ethical judgment moderated by subjects' levels of narcissism? By looking at both intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity, we examine how narcissism affects those with varying religious commitment. Within each type of religious commitment, we also view adherence to or lack of adherence to orthodox Christian belief and whether those who hold such beliefs are influenced by narcissistic tendencies. Our dependent variable, ethical judgment, is used to determine which profile of religiosity and orthodox belief is most susceptible to poor ethical judgment and the role of expressed narcissistic personality traits for those who differ in terms of their religious views.

Methodology

An online survey method is used to collect data from 423 undergraduate Principles of Marketing students who are given extra credit for participation. Of the surveys collected, 385 are usable. The sample is deemed appropriate for three reasons. First, all students are business students and can be expected to carry a close approximation of their current values and personality traits into the business world in the future. Second, businesses want to focus their hiring process on prospective employees who will behave ethically and not embroil the company in embarrassing and possibly illegal activities (cf., Traiser and Eighmy 2011). Finally, student samples are acceptable for establishing relationships between variables in basic research (Calder et al. 1981).

The dependent variable in this study is respondents' judgment of ethical scenarios presented in written form in the survey instrument. To avoid respondent fatigue, we use a sample of six (6) ethical scenarios from Conroy and Emerson's (2004) study. Possible composite scores on these six items range from a high of 42 (most unethical judgment) to a low of 6 (least unethical judgment— $\alpha = .76$).

To assess religiosity, we use Gorsuch and McPherson's (1989) revision of Allport and Ross' (1967) Religious Orientation Scale. We also use Kirkpatrick's (1988) results to differentiate between the extrinsic personal and the extrinsic social dimensions of the scale. The final scale uses 14 items, seven items each, to capture the intrinsic ($\alpha = .90$) and extrinsic ($\alpha = .86$) dimensions of religiosity.

For orthodox Christian beliefs, we selected a slightly modified version of the short form (Hunsberger 1989) of the original Christian Orthodoxy Scale (Fullerton and Hunsberger 1982). The seven-item scale has statistical properties comparable to the long version (Hunsberger 1989). Christian Orthodoxy is a unidimensional construct that represents beliefs historically common to Christians based on the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed ($\alpha = .92$).

To measure narcissism, we use the NPI-16 (Ames et al. 2006). This 16-item scale is derived from Raskin and Terry's (1988) original 40-item measure. The NPI-16 is shown to exhibit psychometric properties comparable to the original form ($\alpha = .82$). All measures are presented in the Appendix.

This study was approved by the local IRB board, and the research was performed in accordance with the ethical standards laid down in the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki. All persons involved in the study gave their informed consent prior to participating in the study and are offered the option to withdraw from the study with no penalty.

Results

To test for effects associated with religious orientation and narcissism, we conduct our analysis in a series of steps. First, we use cluster analysis to form groups of respondents based on their religious orientation. Using these clusters, we examine for differences in ethical judgment. Finally, we use regression analysis to test for the influence of narcissism on ethical judgment for each of the different religious orientation groups. Overall, we find three distinct clusters or groups of respondents based on religious orientation. These groups are different in terms of ethical judgment and the effect of narcissism, the regression slope, is different for one of these groups.

Cluster Analysis

We choose to approach our study using a taxonomic methodology. Prior work examining the effects of religiosity and ethics often have utilized a correlational framework, with regression and structural equation modeling being the primary tools used (e.g., Klemmack et al. 2007; Koenig et al. 1997). As noted by Fife et al. (2011), there are two potential issues with this approach when studying religiosity. First, because dimensions of religiosity appear to be highly correlated (Koenig et al. 2001), multicollinearity can be an issue, potentially biasing effects. Second, correlational approaches are based on the implicit assumption that separate dimensions of religiosity operate in an additive manner; that is, all dimensions are viewed as either positively or negatively contributing to a person's religiosity. Attempts to define religiosity as a single linear dimension, something one has more or less of, are likely too simple, and can be misleading. In using a taxonomic approach, we are able to describe a person's religiosity in terms not of being more or less religious, but as being religious in different ways on different dimensions (Klemmack et al. 2007; Miller and Thoresen 2003; Rinaman et al. 2009).

In conducting our cluster analysis, we follow guidelines recommended by Hair et al. (2010). The goal of our cluster analysis is to form similar groups of respondents based on their religious orientation and degree of agreement with orthodox Christian beliefs that are sufficiently distinct on each of these dimensions. In our analysis, we use three religious orientation variables—internal religious orientation, external religious orientation (personal), external religious orientation (social)—plus orthodoxy. Each of these variables is standardized and mean-centered prior to the analysis. We begin by using a hierarchical approach to arrive at an appropriate number of clusters. Then, we use a non-hierarchical approach to refine the cluster membership for each respondent.

In the hierarchical cluster analysis, we use the Ward’s method employing squared Euclidian distance to measure similarity. The Ward’s method is used due to its tendency to generate homogeneous clusters that are relatively equal in size (Hair et al. 2010). In using the Euclidian distance to measure similarity, we lessen any effect of multicollinearity (Punj and Stewart 1983). Based on the agglomeration coefficient generated, the initial cluster results indicate that a solution from 2 to 5 clusters would be acceptable as each successive cluster results in an approximately equal increase in heterogeneity. We save membership of each respondent for each of these potential solutions and examine the distinctiveness of each group using an ANOVA with post-hoc comparisons. Results indicate that a 3-cluster solution returns three distinct groups, whereas the 4- and 5-cluster solutions return groups which are not as distinct. The 2-group solution eliminates an important group. The resulting 3-cluster solution is used in the next stage of the cluster analysis.

In the second stage, we use a non-hierarchical clustering algorithm—*K*-means clustering. We use the cluster centroids from the initial cluster results as seed points for the analysis. Using a non-hierarchical analysis to finalize our clusters allows for reassignment of respondents to more appropriate clusters as a part of an optimization procedure. A *K*-means approach is a commonly used approach to assign final cluster membership and is especially effective when non-random starting points are used (Punj and

Stewart 1983; Currim and Schneider 1991). A profile of the final cluster solution is contained in Table 1.

An ANOVA with planned comparisons is conducted to profile and determine cluster distinctiveness. As anticipated, the overall ANOVA is significant for the three religious orientation dimensions as well as orthodoxy, indicating significant differences among the groups of respondents on each dimension (all *F* values >34.00, all *p* values <.01). Follow-up planned comparisons for each of the religious orientation dimensions are also significant, indicating that each cluster is distinct from the other on these dimensions (all *t* values >5.00, all *p* values <.05). The mean values are indicated in Table 1 along with the ordinal placement of the mean values among the three clusters based on the significant contrasts. As noted, Cluster 1 contains 76 respondents who are *lowest* in internal religious orientation and orthodoxy but are *moderate* in their extrinsic religious orientation. We refer to Cluster 1 as Skeptics. Cluster 2 contains the largest number of respondents who are *moderate* in their intrinsic religious orientation and orthodoxy, but are *highest* in their extrinsic religious orientation. We refer to Cluster 2 as Nominal Christians. Cluster 3 contains 131 respondents who are *highest* in their intrinsic religious orientation and orthodoxy, and who are *lowest* in their extrinsic religious orientation. We refer to Cluster 3 as Devout Christians.

Cluster Effects Related to Ethical Judgment and Narcissism

We use the formed clusters in subsequent analysis. First, we compare for differences in ethical judgment between the three clusters. An ANOVA with planned contrasts is performed on the composite ethical judgment variable. Higher (lower) values are associated with worse (better) ethical judgment. The overall ANOVA is significant, indicating differences between the three clusters (*F* = 4.69, *p* < .05). Planned contrasts reveal that Cluster 1 on average has worse ethical judgment (Mean_{Narcissism} = .30) than Cluster 2 (Mean_{Narcissism} = -.02, *t* = 2.62, *p* < .05) and Cluster 3 (Mean_{Narcissism} = -.15, *t* = 2.94, *p* < .01).

Table 1 Cluster analysis profiles (means/ordinal placement)

| Religious orientation dimension | Cluster 1 (<i>N</i> = 76) | Cluster 2 (<i>N</i> = 178) | Cluster 3 (<i>N</i> = 131) |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Int. rel. orientation | -1.23 (low) | .08 (moderate) | .89 (high) |
| Orthodoxy | -1.78 (low) | .35 (moderate) | .56 (high) |
| Ext. rel. orientation (pers.) | -.15 (moderate) | .58 (high) | -1.00 (low) |
| Ext. rel. orientation (soc.) | -1.78 (moderate) | .14 (high) | -.26 (low) |

The mean values are statistically equal for Clusters 2 and 3 ($t = 1.08, p > .10$).

To determine the effect of narcissism within each of the clusters, a regression is conducted with cluster membership and narcissism as independent variables and ethical judgment as the dependent variable. We include a dummy variable coded as “1” for membership in a specific cluster and “0” if not a member of that cluster. We also include a test of equality of slopes to determine whether the influence of narcissism is equal across all three clusters (Ho: $\beta_1 = \beta_2 = \beta_3$).

Regression results for the full model are included in Table 2. The model is significant ($F = 8.98, R^2 = .13$), and narcissism is a significant predictor of ethical judgment ($\beta = .208, p < .05$). Importantly, the test of equality of slopes is significant ($F = 4.02, p < .05$) indicating that the effect of narcissism is not equal for all clusters. In Table 3, we present the simple slopes for the effect of narcissism along with the mean for ethical judgment within each cluster. As noted, the standardized regression beta for narcissism’s effect on ethical judgment is significant for Cluster 2 ($\beta = .320, p < .01$) and Cluster 3 ($\beta = .261, p < .01$). However, narcissism is not a significant predictor of ethical judgment for Cluster 1 ($\beta = .12, p > .10$). The regressions slopes for each cluster are shown in Fig. 1.

As follow-up to the regression analysis, we conduct a series of comparisons by forming a new grouping variable of respondents at the highest (upper quartile) and lowest

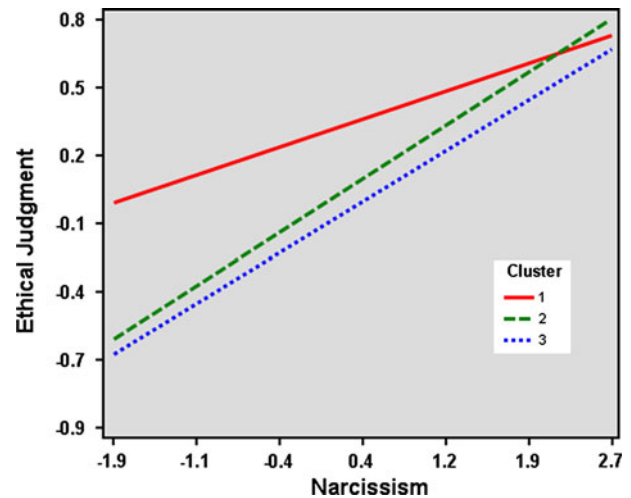


Fig. 1 Simple slopes for narcissism by cluster

(lower quartile) end of the spectrum of reported narcissism. We compare respondents in the different clusters within each range of narcissism. As indicated in the regression slope analysis, respondents in the lowest range of narcissism exhibit the worst ethical judgment in the Skeptic cluster (Cluster 1) when compared to the Nominal cluster (Cluster 2: t value = 2.34, $p < .05$) and Devout cluster (Cluster 3: t value = 2.70, $p < .01$). However, respondents in the highest range of narcissism report equally poor ethical judgments across all clusters (Cluster 1 vs. 2: t value = 1.02, $p > .10$; Cluster 1 vs. 3: t value = 1.33, $p > .10$, Cluster 2 vs. 3: t value = .87, $p > .10$).

Table 2 Regression results for full model

| | Estimate |
|---------------------|-----------|
| Intercept | .019 |
| Narcissism | .208** |
| DumVar1 | .257* |
| DumVar2 | −.151 |
| InteractionTerm1 | −.214* |
| InteractionTerm2 | −.07 |
| F-value | 8.98** |
| R^2 (Adj. R^2) | .13 (.11) |

** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

Table 3 Effects for cluster membership and narcissism on ethical judgment

| | Cluster 1 ($N = 76$) | Cluster 2 ($N = 178$) | Cluster 3 ($N = 131$) |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Mean ethical judgment ^a | .30 | −.02 | −.15 |
| Std. β (narcissism) | .12 ^{ns} | .320** | .261** |

** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

^a Lower mean denotes better judgment

Discussion

One of the enduring criticisms of those who claim to be Christian is the oft-observed discrepancy between some adherents’ stated religious beliefs and their unethical behavior. In fact, public examples abound of those self-identified as Christians who have acted in ways contrary to Christian teaching. Since unethical judgment seems incongruent with sincere religious commitment and an orthodox Christian belief system, this study examines one hypothesis as to why such discrepancies occur. That is, we looked at how levels of narcissism moderated the effects of subjects’ extrinsic and intrinsic self-reported religiosity as well as their agreement with orthodox Christian beliefs on their ethical judgment.

One important finding from this study was the emergence of three distinct clusters of subjects, which we have termed Skeptics, Nominal Christians, and Devout Christians. Not only are the Skeptics low in professed internalization of their religious faith, but they also largely reject foundational Christian teachings that have been

acknowledged by Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant denominations since the earliest days of the Church. The Skeptic's orientation toward religiosity is largely external, when it exists at all, suggesting that religion is a convenience that Skeptics adopt for social and personal reasons. Notably, Skeptics in general exhibit worse ethical judgment than respondents in either of the other two clusters.

Nominal Christians (Cluster 2) are moderate in their intrinsic religious orientation as well as in their orthodox beliefs. However, they are high in their extrinsic religious orientation, both personal and social, which suggests that these Christians focus more on their identity within the Christian sub-culture than on the inherently unique (compared to other religious traditions) beliefs and behavioral aspects of their religious commitment.

Devout Christians (Cluster 3) are high in intrinsic religious orientation and orthodoxy, which indicates that they fully internalize Christian beliefs and values. They are low in extrinsic religious orientation, both personal and social, also indicating that they discriminate between a truly Christian commitment and a mere external accommodation to the sub-culture.

Our taxonomic approach is validated by the ways in which these clusters differ in their religious orientation. The measured dimensions are not additive. In addition, the usage of a taxonomic approach allows us to uncover the subtlety of effects due to narcissism in relation to religiosity. Our results demonstrate that narcissism operates differently depending on one's faith orientation. Subjects in both Clusters 2 and 3 show better ethical judgment than the Skeptics overall but especially those whose narcissistic tendencies are at the low end of the spectrum. However, the situation undergoes a notable alteration as levels of narcissism rise for subjects within each cluster. Both Nominals and Devouts show degrees of poor ethical judgment equal to that of the Skeptics when accompanied by higher degrees of narcissism, a finding that suggests a dramatic transformation for both Nominals and the Devouts when ethical judgment is clouded by narcissistic tendencies.

For the Skeptics, the range of scores for ethical judgment from low to high lacks the range that is found for the Nominals and the Devouts. Moreover, increased narcissism among Skeptics does not result in significantly worse ethical judgment. However, the same cannot be said for the Nominals or the Devouts. For both of these clusters, as narcissism increases among subjects so does the tendency to demonstrate worse ethical judgment. Thus, a higher level of narcissism is more likely to be associated with unethical judgment among Nominal Christians and Devout Christians than Skeptics. That is, the effects of high levels of narcissism appear to dominate ethical judgment regardless of the effects of religious orientation or orthodox

beliefs, and narcissism is more harmful in those who might be expected to be more ethical.

Even so, the findings are perhaps not surprising when comparing Skeptics with Nominal Christians. Though Skeptics appear to have little use for orthodox Christianity, they may have internalized other religious or ethical standards to which they adhere in place of Christianity. Nominals, on the other hand, appear to give lip service to the Christian sub-culture but to lack depth in their internal commitment to the tenets of the faith, including those teachings that impact ethical judgment. Thus, it is possible that Skeptics' susceptibility to the effects of narcissism is less obvious because the internalization of their ethical standard is more pronounced than the Nominals' superficial internalization of a Christian-based ethical standard.

An explanation for the Devout cluster is not so easily hypothesized. There is an inherent contradiction between high levels of narcissism and adherence to Christian orthodoxy that causes these findings to be surprising and to seem counterintuitive. This discrepancy seems apparent because the teachings of Christ make clear believers' responsibility to put others before themselves, to uphold what is right even in difficult circumstances, and to make ethical decisions in submission to the transcendent authority and commandments of God. Thus, we conclude that the negative impact of narcissism is sufficiently intrusive and powerful that it entices people into behaving in ways inimical to their most deeply held beliefs. In short, the narcissistic Devouts who may choose to exercise their poor ethical judgment would be committing acts that are, according to their own internalized value system, blatantly hypocritical.

Such a finding helps explain why religiosity alone does not produce consistent responses with respect to ethical judgment in the ethics literature (e.g., Hegarty and Sims 1979; Kidwell et al. 1987; Kurpis et al. 2008). Our findings suggest that statements of religiosity and commitment to orthodox beliefs are insufficient to predict good ethical judgment. Moreover, if respondents choose to act in accordance with their poor ethical judgment, they will be acting contrary to what one might expect to observe. These findings may also explain something about why religious people make decisions that are unethical and immoral: another behavioral driver, narcissism, acts as a powerful inducement to commit unethical acts. Narcissism, with its emphasis on self-serving opinions and actions, represents the flawed nature of human beings that Christian orthodoxy addresses. However, some adherents may choose not to exercise the option of subordinating their selfishness to their belief system.

The fact that unethical judgment is less likely to occur among Nominals and Devouts when narcissism is low suggests direction for addressing ethical training in the classroom and for sensitizing employees concerning ethical

standards in the workplace. Narcissism among participants in ethics training seminars and classes should be assessed and addressed in order to confront its pitfalls. Though people will always be tempted to act in ways that are self-serving, the fact of heightening awareness of the powerful effects of narcissism on ethical judgment could be helpful in offsetting future unethical decisions. In addition, effective interventions to identify and deter narcissistic behaviors are not well-known but may show potential for improving an organization's ethical climate.

Appendix: Scale Items

Ethical Judgments (Conroy and Emerson 2004)

Please read each of the following scenarios and indicate to what degree you believe the behavior is acceptable: (1 = "Never Acceptable" to 7 = "Always Acceptable")

- An underpaid executive padded his expense account by about \$3,000 a year.
- A company paid a \$350,000 "consulting" fee to an official of a foreign country. In return, the official promised assistance in obtaining a contract that will produce \$10 million profit for the contracting company.
- A corporate executive promoted a loyal friend and competent manager to the position of divisional vice president in preference to a better-qualified manager with whom he had no close personal ties.
- As part of the marketing strategy for a product, the producer changed its color and marketed it as "new and improved," even though its other characteristics were unchanged.
- Martha is a new sales representative who is taking over a sales territory in which her firm has been unsuccessful in landing a very large client, Giant, Inc. determined to make the sale, Martha decided to violate company policy and pay for a gift to Giant, Inc.'s manager.
- An electricity producer decided not to upgrade a smokestack scrubber since its releases are still within the legal limits and the upgrade would reduce profits by 10%.

Religiosity (Gorsuch and McPherson 1989)

For each of the following statements, please choose the response that is reflective of your own beliefs: (1 = "I strongly disagree" to 5 = "I strongly agree"—I = Intrinsic, Es = Extrinsic Social, Ep = Extrinsic Personal)

- I enjoy reading about my religion. (I)
- I go to church because it helps me to make friends. (Es)

- It doesn't much matter what I believe so long as I am good. (I)
- It is important to me to spend time in private thought and prayer. (I)
- I have often had a strong sense of God's presence. (I)
- I pray mainly to gain relief and protection. (Ep)
- I try hard to live all my life according to my religious beliefs. (I)
- What religion offers me most is comfort in times of trouble and sorrow. (Ep)
- Prayer is for peace and happiness. (Ep)
- Although I am religious, I don't let it affect my daily life. (I)
- I go to church mostly to spend time with my friends. (Es)
- My whole approach to life is based on my religion. (I)
- I go to church mainly because I enjoy seeing people I know there. (Es)
- Although I believe in my religion, many other things are more important in life. (I)

Orthodox Christian Beliefs (Hunsberger 1989)

For each of the statements below please choose the response that is reflective of your own beliefs: (1 = "Strongly disagree" to 6 = "Strongly agree")

- Jesus Christ is the divine Son of God.
- The Bible may be an important book of moral teachings, but it was no more inspired by God than were many other such books in the history of human beings.
- The concept of God is an old superstition that is no longer needed to explain things in the modern era.
- Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, God provided a way for the forgiveness of people's sins.
- Despite what many people believe, there is no such thing as a God who is aware of people's actions.
- Jesus was crucified, died, and buried, but on the third day He rose from the dead.
- God is one in essence and yet is three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Narcissism—NPI-16 (Ames et al. 2006)

Please read each pair of statements and then choose the one that is closer to your own feelings and beliefs. Indicate your answer by choosing the statement that best represents your feelings. (Coded 0–1)

I know that I am good because everybody keeps telling me so.

When people compliment me I sometimes get embarrassed.

I like to be the center of attention.

I prefer to blend in with the crowd.

I think I am a special person.

I am no better and no worse than most people.

I like having authority over people.

I don't mind following orders.

I find it easy to manipulate people.

I don't like it when I find myself manipulating people.

I insist upon getting the respect that is due me.

I usually get the respect that I deserve.

I am apt to show off if I get the chance.

I try not to be a show off.

I always know what I am doing.

Sometimes I am not sure of what I am doing.

Everybody likes to hear my stories.

Sometimes I tell good stories.

I expect a great deal from other people.

I like to do things for other people.

I really like to be the center of attention.

It makes me uncomfortable to be the center of attention.

People always seem to recognize my authority.

Being an authority doesn't mean that much to me.

I am going to be a great person.

I hope I am going to be successful.

I can make anybody believe anything I want them to.

People sometimes believe what I tell them.

I am more capable than other people.

There is a lot that I can learn from other people.

I am an extraordinary person.

I am much like everybody else.

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