

## Status Inconsistency, Narcissism, and Ego Bashing in the Workplace: A Theoretical Model

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### Abstract

An intriguing form of aggressive behavior that targets the total ego of an individual can be typically observed in the work environment of certain societies that are undergoing rapid social change and consequent status challenges and rivalry. This behavior is explained in terms of the interaction between two variables: Status inconsistency and narcissism. Forms of status inconsistency produced at the structural level can lead to the experience of psychological strain. This strain provokes an aggressive reaction that may be displaced on others in the work place. The emphasis in some societies on the prestige of the position tends to further implicate individual narcissism in the reaction. The narcissistically bound reaction to status inconsistency results in aggression being lashed-out against the totality of an individual's self rather than against extensions of the self. A search for convenient targets follows the hydraulic model that selectively targets persons occupying vulnerable positions.

### 1. The Problem

A universally familiar type of aggressive behavior is that directed at the total self of an individual with the intention of diminishing or degrading the victim's self-worth as both as an occupant of a particular status and as a person. In everyday interpersonal interaction this behavior is usually referred to as "putting-down" someone. This type of aggression takes place in all familiar contexts and involves a host of easily recognizable behaviors that are expressed by verbal utterances, body language, and subtle forms of withdrawal of communication and avoidance. An attack targeting the self-worth of an individual tends to elicit strong reactions and sometimes lasting animosities and even vendettas.

What distinguishes this type of aggression is that it is primarily directed against the total self or total ego of a person. Rather than attacking extensions of the ego such as one's ideas, managerial decisions, effectiveness and efficiency in completing projects -- the total ego of the person is attacked. For example, an employee after being treated fairly is suddenly subjected to an abusive verbal reprimand in front of other coworkers and for reasons that do not justify such reaction from his boss. Other less direct forms are more common: an employee may be ignored, not invited to an important meeting, his name unjustly dropped from an official team, his appointment with a senior official is abruptly cancelled, he is made to wait for an unreasonable period of time before a scheduled meeting with a senior administrator, and his telephone or email messages are not returned. The reaction to this type of attack is far greater than the reaction to a criticism directed at one's decisions or performance. Attacks directed at the ascribed social and organizational status of an individual

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will simultaneously target the total ego of that individual, which would explain the strong reaction associated with status challenges.

Attacks directed at the statuses of individuals are a universally common behavior. Societies undergoing high degree of social change tend to undergo increases in status anxiety, status competition, and status challenges (e.g., Nisbit & Perrin, 1977). I have had substantial work experiences in several governmental agencies and universities in North America and the Middle East. I have observed this aggressive behavior that targets status to be relatively high within such organizations operating in the Middle East and particularly the Arabian Gulf Region. I have observed this behavior as perpetrated by senior male administrators against selected junior male employees, and against selected clients. Senior female administrators appeared equally adept and ready to carry out the behavior when organizational conditions allowed. This aggressive behavior, which I shall refer to as “ego bashing”, is seen as a serious problem that can negatively impact mental health at the work place and accordingly warrants an attempt at a dynamic understanding.

## **2. The Behavior Targeted by this Analysis**

Aggression at its three mediums of expression (physical, emotional, and verbal-cognitive) can be caused by large number of variables and by their interactions as presented in the vast literature on aggression. Aggression at the ‘white collar’ work place is typically expressed at the emotional and verbal-cognitive mediums; it is also multi-causal generally falling into the following categories: 1) aggression provoked by an organizational stressor or by the frustrating performance of a co-worker or manager; 2) aggression provoked by threats to dignity and security of the worker; 3) aggression carried-out for furthering the organizational goals of a worker and the reaction to such aggressive behaviors; 4) aggression displaced by a worker on other workers as a result of anger and frustration generated by personality or external factors that are not directly related to the work situation.

Ego bashing can be precipitated by a host of organizational factors encompassed by the above categories. The concern of this paper, however, is with the displaced aggression that is directly caused by status inconsistency. This focus on status inconsistency is justified by the assumption that this phenomenon is responsible for a significant amount of ego bashing expressed within organizations of certain countries.

## **3. A Brief View of the Literature on Displaced Aggression**

A content analysis of 122 social psychology texts (Marcus-Newhall, Pedersen, Carlson & Miller, 2000) confirmed that displaced aggression received a surge of attention immediately following the 1939 publication of the frustration-aggression research by J. Dollard and associates. Theoretical interest in displaced aggression sharply declined soon after however experimental research continued. A moderator analysis conducted by the above authors indicated that the experimental literature supports three major conclusions: (a) The more negative the setting in which the participant and target interacted, the greater the magnitude of displaced aggression; (b) the more similar the provocateur and target, the more displaced aggression; and (c) consistent with the contrast effect, the intensity of initial provocation is inversely related to the magnitude of displaced aggression. Subsequent to the above comprehensive review, a theoretical model of social and personality factors that mediate the triggered displaced aggression was developed (Miller, Pedersen, Earleywine, & Pollock, 2003). The major factors are: (1) aspects of the initial provocation and the immediate situation in which it occurred; (2) characteristics of the personality factors of the actor that would maintain extended affects that can lead to the triggering event; (3) actions and attributes of the target of displaced aggression that augment these affects. A questionnaire for displaced aggression (Denson, Pedersen, & Miller, 2006) provided 3-factor conceptualization of the construct: an affective, cognitive, and a behavioral dimension.

The present theoretical model is only concerned with displaced aggression precipitated by status inconsistency. Factors other than narcissism that mediate the intensity of reaction such as the characteristics of the setting, personality dispositions of the actor, similarity of perpetrator and recipient, and degree of provocation are not of concern to the model at this stage.

#### **4. Method**

Incidents of the above described behavior “ego bashing” were witnessed by me first hand and some were relayed to me directly by professional acquaintances who complained of being victimized in this manner. I noted these incidents and discussed them with two Canadian academics of Arab origin who were teaching in an Arab Gulf country and one British consultant and one senior manager in an oil company. They all were able to recognize the behavior and all were of the impression that it is much less common in universities and government departments in the West. They also had the impression that when such a behavior is expressed in the West, it is carried in a less direct and more masked manner. The interest in and concurrence of my colleagues regarding this type of organizational behavior motivated me to consider embarking on an empirical investigation. However, upon further assessment of the research project, I found out that it was practically difficult for me to carry out. Even a case analysis that can provide details on ego bashing was not practically feasible. Furthermore this behavior has not been identified separately in previous literature dealing with aggression within organizations in the Middle East and no data is available on its frequency and relative spread.

The matter would have ended then had it not been for my hunch that narcissism is highly involved in the aggressive behavior in question, and for my strong concern that the problematic impact narcissism should be identified and researched in Arab organizational behavior. More than any other personality disorder, pathological narcissism is expressed socially in that the individual’s overriding concern is to impress others and to aggrandize or vehemently defend a public self-image. Thus beyond its destructive impact at the interpersonal level, narcissism can have serious social and political implications. In his analysis of the sectarian strife between the Orthodox Serbs and the Catholic Croats during the early 1990ties, Ignatieff (1998) implicates narcissism in the exaggeration of self-definition differences among the two groups and the subsequent escalation of conflict. He does not accept the idea that nationalistic wars are eruptions of tribal hatreds and ancient enmities rather a construction of a new identity where minor differences, indifferent in themselves, are narcissistically transformed into major differences.

My own research interest in pathological narcissism—having taught courses in personality disorders—and the encouragement engendered by my reading of Ignatieff’s analysis, I decided to pursue a theoretical approach that would highlight the problematic impact of narcissism as well as of status inconsistency in Arab societies. This approach would view ego bashing as a universally occurring behavior that can be triggered by many factors including status inconsistency. Status inconsistency causes ego bashing when status inconsistency challenges the narcissism of the perpetrator. The interaction of these two variables (status inconsistency and narcissism) would sufficiently explain a significant portion of ego bashing occurring in organizations. It should be stressed that the two variables are not selected because they belong to two relevant disciplines (psychology and sociology) but because they are the two most promising explanatory variables. In the methodological approach adopted here, the problem itself recommends the most useful variables regardless of the particular discipline they belong to. The technical terms employed are taken by necessity from the disciplinary context of each variable. The paper will also seek to illustrate the interaction of the two variables in some non-organizational contexts with the aim of further elucidating their impact of the two variables and not for empirical grounding of assumptions.

Rigor is here based on the established validity of concepts used, on their linking, and on the explanatory value of the model. Hypotheses for future empirical research would then

follow directly from the theoretical model. Ego bashing is here defined as aggressive behaviors that target the total self (self-worth) of individuals within formal organizations.

## 5. Social Status

Status has two meanings in sociology. Most sociologists define status as a position occupied by an individual in a social system. “Husband” and “wife” for example, are statuses in the marital system just as “lawyer” and “judge” are statuses in the court systems. Since statuses are positions in social systems, they exist independently of the particular individuals who occupy them. People are associated with statuses only through their participation in the social systems that include those statuses. Status is also employed to refer to *prestige* as Max Weber and other sociologists speak of “a high status occupation” or someone who is “status conscious”. Status in this sense refers to a vertical perspective that permits considerations of “higher” and “lower” (hierarchy and rank) to become relevant (Boudon & Bourricaud, 1989). Thus, status is not only the sum of real or virtual resources available in a certain position but it is also the appraisal of them and an appraisal of the way these resources and duties have been performed. As a major source of authority held, the occupied status becomes a perspective through which persons see themselves and others around them. The prestige part of status is particularly stressed in this paper because of its interaction with the narcissism of individual occupants and that of relevant groups.

The concept of role in sociology is similar to that of status in that it refers to a social position with a series of obligations and expectations defining performance. As in the case of status, role is also distinguishable from “role occupant”. The main difference between role and status lies in that “role” does not carry with it the implications of ranking whereas “status” does. For example, the role of a household father may meet substantially the same criteria in two different cultures however the status of father in the social order may be higher in one culture than the other. Accordingly, a position can be construed both as role and as status.

Status within a social group or an organization can be based on dichotomous factors that can be qualified as *ascribed* or *achieved*. Ascribed factors of status are those that are bestowed on the individual by external conditions that are not the product of his or her direct volition such as age, gender, ethnicity, social charisma of position held, and the reputation of the extended family. Achieved factors of status are those largely earned by individual efforts and merits such as the level of education, quality of performance, professional expertise, and earned promotion.

The sociological literature indicates that a challenge to one’s ascribed status tends to elicit a stronger reaction than a challenge to a status that one has achieved. For example, an insult such as “you’re not a man” or “you’re an inadequate parent” would elicit a stronger aggressive reaction than an accusation of not being a financial success. The ascribed status becomes internalized as self-identity making the challenge against it more threatening to the individual.

## 6. Status Inconsistency

Status consistency or status congruence occurs when a person’s position within a certain group or office is equivalent to those held outside that group or office. For example, the highest-ranking member in the group is usually the one who is appointed to chair a certain committee. Status consistency allows for the smooth functioning of such a committee as the chairperson also commands the respect of the members. *Status inconsistency* takes place when incongruence exists between the person’s position within a group or office and the equivalent positions outside that group or office. Having a young college graduate chair a project group composed of senior and more experienced professionals would be an example

of status inconsistency. Status inconsistency creates strain in the group as well as within individuals experiencing it.

Conditions for status inconsistency are numerous and are constantly being generated as a result of social and organizational change. The following are some typical instances of status inconsistency:

1. An individual may enjoy a high social and political family status but has a low individual financial capability.
2. An individual may possess great wealth and popularity but has low or no formal education.
3. An individual may enjoy a high social and political family status but holds a low occupational position.
4. An individual may possess high personal charisma in the organization but ends up in a low ranking bureaucratic position.
5. An individual may reach seniority and high position in an organization but lacks certain technical skills in which junior and younger employees are proficient.
6. An individual may be placed in a high position (president, chairman of the board etc.) with little actual authority or power.
7. An individual may hold high academic degrees with an appropriate academic position but have major gaps in his academic knowledge or inadequacies in his professional performance.

Hiring practices by human resource departments sometimes place employees in positions for which they are not qualified thus creating mismatches that increase status inconsistency situations. In the same manner, politically influenced appointments sometimes reward individuals by promoting them beyond their levels of competences according to *The Peter Principle* (Peter & Hull, 1969). Such conditions for potential status inconsistency may also be brought about by governmental policies in some developing countries that favor hiring newly graduated and inexperienced nationals to replace foreign managers.

A review of the *Sociofile* and *Social Science Citation Index* databases since 1973 revealed 46 studies focusing on status inconsistency or status incongruence. In two thirds of the articles the former term (status inconsistency) was used. Some studies dealt with the impact of status inconsistency on variety of issues and behaviors, such as gender, social class perception, international conflicts, job satisfaction, motivation, social mobility, and voting attitudes. Some other studies dealt with the effect of perceived over qualification on status anxiety, on compensatory power seeking, and on entrepreneurial innovation. Several studies dealt with the impact of status inconsistency on health including stress, depression, high blood pressure, substance abuse, and serum-cholesterol. Only two studies dealing with the impact of status inconsistency on aggressive behavior were found. Yick (2001) examined the merits and limitations of status inconsistency and feminist's theories in explaining domestic violence among Chinese immigrant families. Hinojosa & Sberna (2002) related the positive correlation between the increase in the rates of participation of young black males in the market and the increase of their rates of suicide to status inconsistency resulting from lower wage and lower status positions occupied by black males.

## 7. The Conversion of an Achieved Status into an Ascribed Status

Ascribed and achieved statuses can merge and exchange positions as they can be subject to particular social interpretations. For example, a certain level of professional expertise, which is an achieved status acquired through education and experience, may be experienced as an ascribed status when the expertise becomes highly evaluated. Similarly a university education is an achieved status but can be experienced as ascribed when a Ph.D. degree confers on the holder a level of deference within the community. When a high value is placed on the prestige aspect of status, as may be the case in societies still versed in tradition (where position is often worn like a badge), many instances of achieved roles would, as a result, be experienced as ascribed.

Achieved roles can also receive additional prestige from the small collectivity the position holder belongs to. The status holder is not only an occupant of an admired position but also a representative of his family or his clan of relatives in that 'glorious' position. This is often implied in such proud statements as "my son-in-law is the chief of surgery in the regional hospital" or "my uncle is the chief of police." The prestige bestowed upon the status holder by his family or clan contributes further to the transformation of the achieved status into an ascribed status that has to reflect the family image (group narcissism). The group identity in collectivist-oriented societies can incorporate an individual's achieved status into an ascribed collective status. In a similar context Lamy (2003) describes the case of a professional Peruvian woman who refused a job in Mexico stating that in Mexico she "will be treated as a Mexican". By that she meant that she will not be able to bring her upper class status to Mexico and she will be treated and interacted with as any Mexican. Thus, given the cultural proclivity for individual and group status ascription and aggrandizement, the severity of status inconsistency experiences is expected to be relatively high in such societies.

## 8. Lashing-out

It was suggested before that status inconsistency elicits tension within the group and within the individual. The individual may react to both his perception of the incongruancy and the fear of embarrassment as well as to tension or strain generated by the group's tacit apprehension or disapproval. Thus the high-ranking director who holds a high university degree but lacks actual academic competence can labor under a severe and constant strain. A president-manager of a large organization who lacks actual managerial skills and insights is equally under constant strain. This strain generated by status inconsistency inevitably leads to an outward aggressive reaction. Even if the initial experience of status inconsistency is embarrassment, the reaction, in most cases, will eventually take the form of a direct or an indirect aggressive lash-out.

The response to status inconsistency by resorting to attack was first described by Albert Cohen (1955) in his account of the negativistic and violent behavior of juveniles. Cohen theorized that a central goal of youth is to attain status. The lower-class youngster was forced to compete at school with middle-class classmates who, by virtue of their middle-class upbringing, have an academic advantage over him. The perception of inadequacy or incongruence within the student status of the lower-class boy leads to the experience of embarrassment and strain. According to Cohen, the lower-class boy seeks to compensate for his loss of self-esteem by joining violent gangs and terrorizing middle-class boys and by negating their values. The joining of gang subcultures may be a long-term adjustment to the experience of status inconsistency and status frustration but there are more direct or spontaneous reactions to similar status related strain. The term *lashing-out* is an appropriate one to employ in these cases; it is usually used to refer to aggressive behavior that is impulsively displaced often on interacting others and propelled by the need to alleviate psychological stain.

Lashing-out is different from *acting-out*. Acting-out is defined as the inappropriate, and long lasting, behavioral expression that serves to relieve tension associated with denied emotions or to communicating them in a disguised way. Such behaviors may include arguing, fighting, stealing, threatening, or throwing tantrums. Acting-out is often assumed to underlie antisocial or delinquent behavior in children or adolescents but is not limited to this age group (American Psychological Association, 2007).

## 9. Status Inconsistency and Narcissistic Investments

A challenge directed at an ascribed status draws a much stronger reaction than that directed at an achieved status. But why does the challenge to an ascribed status generate a greater intensity of reaction? The answer may be found in the literature on narcissism. The ascribed aspect of a status becomes a part of the social or public identity of self that is protected by narcissistic investments. The psychiatric literature (e.g., Svarkic, 1990) indicates that the greater the narcissistic investment in the public image related to a status, the greater will be the level of destructiveness produced upon being challenged. Experimental research (e.g., Martinez, Zeichner, Reidy, & Miller, 2008) further confirm that narcissism is positively related to displaced aggression. Accordingly, a threat to an ascribed role is expected to generate higher levels of aggression. Due to the social pressures suggested before and, with the passage of time, most instances of status inconsistency are experienced as challenges to the ascribed aspects of status. For example, the prestige of the office one occupies gradually gets converted into personal charisma with its narcissistic overtones.

The literature on narcissism and narcissistic disorders is extensive, but this condition can be briefly described. Narcissism refers to an extensive investment of psychic energy (love, concern, idealization) in individual self and in its public image. We can distinguish between healthy and pathological narcissism. Self-respect, sense of self-worth, dignity, and honor are supported by healthy narcissism. Pathological narcissism is characterized by the alienation of self where aspects of the self are experienced as public perceptions that need to be drastically cherished, and publicly promoted and defended. When dignity is experienced as vanity (externally experienced) and when self-worth is experienced as public image or reputation, a strong need emerges to defend and promote self against any perceived challenge or threat. Pathological narcissism has been implicated in augmenting the aggressive reaction to simple threats or challenges. The higher the narcissistic investment in self-image (pathological narcissism), the greater the retaliatory reaction to any perceived threat or challenge to self.

To summarize what has been said, status inconsistency is an incongruity or discrepancy between an individual's status in one domain and that within another social domain. This inconsistency creates tension within the individual and within the interacting group. This tension eventually leads an individual to an aggressive lashing-out displaced unjustly on interacting others. Status inconsistency involves a challenge to the achieved and ascribed aspects of status, and a challenge to the latter tends to invoke a stronger reaction than in the case of the former. This difference in the intensity of reaction is explained by the assumption that the ascribed status is closer to narcissistic and public aspects of self-concept and accordingly is prone to invoke a stronger destructive reaction upon provocation. It was also suggested that the strong accentuation in some societies on the public image of status and the inclusion of the clan image in the individual status tends to accelerate the conversion of achieved statuses into ascribed ones. This high narcissistic investment in status is expected to augment the aggressive reaction to the challenge generated by status inconsistency.

## **10. Status Inconsistency and Status Rivalry**

There is another cultural factor that may be responsible for further augmenting the aggressive reaction stemming from status inconsistency. This factor which was described by anthropologist Fouad Khouri (1993) pertains to *status rivalry* accentuated by the lack of hierarchical organization of status. Khouri's analyzed certain Arab social groups with a tradition characterized by egalitarian distribution of status among members with a leader who possesses a larger share of status. The situation is analogous to a rosary, a ring of equal pieces with only one larger piece. With the lack of ranking of leadership roles, the leader is forced to maintain his control by direct means involving direct services and bribes as well as by direct intimidation and threats. The presence of norms of hierarchy and subordination within the leadership context will provide the leader with subordinate roles that carry out delegated authority and at the same time reduce the commitment to the notion of status equality among followers. But the lack of hierarchical organization of status forces members to become highly competitive in bids to gain status over their ring of perceived equals. This rivalry among perceived equals leads to the expression of self-assertion by means of direct challenges and put-downs rather than by means of normatively and organizationally structured competition. Only the close circle of friends is exempt from this rivalry. This egalitarian attitude to status together with status rivalry would explain the hasty and arbitrary bestowing of status titles observed in many Arab societies.

## **11. Total Ego is the Target**

The displaced reaction to status inconsistency can have a unique feature. The lash-out is essentially directed against the total person of the recipient-victim. Rather than attacking extensions of the ego such as ideas, opinions, approaches, or techniques held or carried by the other party within a certain context, the individual's total ego or is attacked. Thus, as indicated before, an employee is abusively reprimanded in front of other employees, or is suddenly ignored, not invited to an important meeting; an appointment with the higher authority is abruptly cancelled; his telephone calls are not returned. He is unexpectedly denied promotion or contract renewal; his paycheck is unexplainably delayed which practically leads to having to beg for it; his pride is assaulted by means of a subtle remark or gesture that is drastically out of line with past expressions of courtesy; and the like. All of these assaults are directed against the total ego or total social worth (ascribed status) of the individual; they are essentially status-degrading or status-constricting techniques. The fact that these assaults may be preceded by opposite patterns of politeness, flattery, and acceptance adds to the severity of their impact.

When the assaults are directed at the other's total ego, it is indicative of the fact that the aggressor's own ego and self-worth are being challenged and that his narcissism has been threatened or wounded. Instead of seeking cooperative alliances with others that can cover and strengthen his shortcomings, his vanity refuses to yield and he resorts to attack as a way of achieving security and strength. It is this opting for attack and the avoidance of cooperation that is intriguing and needs to be explained. The introduction of pathological narcissism is intended to explain this opting for attack and for targeting the totality of somebody's ego. The narcissism of the recipient of ego bashing is also highly threatened and induces him or her to retaliate in kind – against the total person of the attacker.

## **12. Ego Bashing and the Hydraulic Model of Aggression**

Looking at the organization as a whole, we can be talking of a potential for aggression that is essentially crude and non-sublimated; its expression can be alien to the objective depiction of issues and to forthright intellectual discourse and cooperation. This potential for aggression

in its search of a convenient target is likely to follow the hydraulic principle of aggression. The hydraulic model states that aggression will ultimately seek expression at the least resistant point (Lorenz, 1966). A great deal of aggression within organizations can be described as camouflaged and hydraulically expressed (Abdennur, 2000). Accordingly, victims of ego bashing are often drawn from the ranks of the organizationally vulnerable individuals such as foreign workers on work permits, those on short renewable contracts, part-timers, or those with weak or with no allies. Individuals with more fortified positions are less readily attacked.

Clients who are perceived as less powerful also run the risk of having their egos bashed by lower ranking employees. For example, an applicant may seek an appointment with a senior manager of a company on his own without obtaining a prior referral from another important authority. Not being referred by a powerful authority can result, within departments of many developing countries, in the applicant being perceived as powerless by the director as well as by junior employees in that office and accordingly his ego becomes a fair game for bashing. By not having the referral from a 'powerful' authority, the applicant is perceived (categorically) as powerless and as a result, he is 'hydraulically' victimized.

### **13. An Organizational Adaptation to Ego Bashing**

A certain supply and demand relationship can be observed in organizations that contain the previously discussed conditions for ego bashing. Habitual ego bashers may seek out employees who would tolerate having their ego being occasionally bashed. These employees may also actively seek to adapt to such subservience motivated by the security and privileges offered by the job. Thus a diminished commitment to pride or honor in a potential employee may become a personal asset and a reason for hiring. There are certain cultural settings that prepare individuals to assume roles of recipients for ego bashing. These cultural settings normatively educate the subordinate employee to absorb, deflect, or sublimate (e.g., through humor) the ego bashing. Such an adaptation can develop into a chronic sadomasochistic relationship if the recipient of ego bashing has no recourse to a sense of honor.

### **14. Conclusion**

The total picture can be described as follows: Various forms of status inconsistency can result in psychological strain. This strain provokes an aggressive reaction that may be displaced on others within the organization. The emphasis in some societies on the prestige of the position tends to convert achieved statuses into ascribed ones and tends to implicate individual narcissism in the reaction. The narcissistic component of status is further augmented by the projection of the extended family public image into the individual status. In addition, an overriding cultural factor may compound the ensuing aggressive reaction by further incorporating it within a context of status rivalry among perceived equals. The narcissistically bound reaction to status inconsistency results in aggression being lashed-out against the totality of the recipient's ego rather than against extensions of that ego. A search for convenient targets for ego bashing follows a hydraulic expression that selectively targets persons occupying vulnerable positions. Habitual ego bashers may selectively recruit individuals who tolerate being recipients of ego bashing.

Ego bashing is likely to prevail in organizations located in relatively traditional or collectivist societies that are undergoing rapid social change and evidencing status insecurity and status competition. Ego bashing can generate severe conflicts and personal vendettas within the organization and outside of it; it can lead to the dissipation of time and energy in retaliatory activities, and to the poisoning of the work atmosphere. An understanding of this dysfunctional behavior will lead to its challenge at the management level and to its abandonment as a form of adjustment at the individual level.

The status inconsistency-narcissism model can be used to understand and further research destructive behavior in other domains than the work place. For example, status inconsistency can be generated at the community level by bestowing on individuals fictitious ascriptions of importance belonging to past family history. The 'polite' and or rather hypocritical addressing of individuals with titles of status belonging to their by-gone ancestors can heighten pathological narcissism in those people. The aggrandized and fictitious self-image clashes with the grim reality of actual powerlessness leading to a lash-out reaction. Status inconsistency-narcissism model can be used to research the antisocial, irrational, and self-destructive behavior of individuals who rise rapidly into fame and wealth such as professional athletes and entertainers. The high status conferred upon such individuals in terms of fame, attention, and money is challenged by the reality of poor personality and intellectual skills of the individual and leading to a destructive lashing-out.

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