

Stars that crash

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ABSTRACT

The present study introduces a model explaining what leads stars to crash and assesses risk factors that lead stars to crash in a sample of 18 celebrities who have had a downfall. Downfalls include alcoholism, drug abuse or addiction, mental illness, myriad relationship problems, death, suicide or other life-changing disasters. First, the paper theorizes that individuals' early environments and social forces, such as assortativeness and affiliation, contribute to their narcissistic traits. The model illustrates how these risk factors including narcissistic traits and the adult environments of stars lead them to engage in behaviors that lead to their downfalls. To examine the usefulness of this model, the paper examined the lives of famous celebrities (i.e., "stars") who had public downfalls ($n = 18$) using secondary sources. It assessed the risk factors involved in the crashing of stars. In concordance with the proposed model, results showed that what the majority of these cases had in common were: Atypical early environments, such as abandonment and trauma, over-indulgent or absent wealthy parents, or an early career; and adult environment conditions, such as colluding social groups and entourages. These factors could be linked to stars having extramarital affairs damaging their marriage or careers; bankruptcy; or alcohol and/or drug addiction. In some cases these factors have led to stars having accidents, or deaths. Furthermore, the study shows that there is a positive correlation between the number of risk factors present and the severity of the downfall of the stars.

KEYWORDS: narcissism, stars, drug abuse, celebrity, childhood, alcohol abuse, wealthy parents, entourage, social environment

INDIVIDUALS WHO ACQUIRE FAME in the public eye, sometimes, end up crashing. Crashing can include alcoholism, drug abuse, addiction, mental illness, myriad relationship problems, death, suicide or other life-changing disasters. For the purpose of this study, *stars* are individuals who receive a lot of media attention, and have become extremely wealthy due to their successful careers or performances. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary ("Star," 2013), a "Star is: a) highly publicized theatrical or motion-picture performer b); an outstandingly talented performer; or c) a person who is preeminent in a particular field." Stars are public figures, idolized in media sources for their extreme wealth or professional success ("Celebrity," 2013). Stardom occurs most commonly in professionals such as actors, musicians, athletes, or politicians, to name a few ("Celebrity," 2013; "The hot new celeb? Sarah!" 2008). The first section of this paper assesses contributing factors and risk factors that can lead stars to crash

and proposes a model explaining their relationship. In the model, we establish that early environments and social forces such as assortativeness and affiliativeness (Koestner & McClelland, 1992) contribute to personality problems and narcissistic behaviors in "stars". Assortativeness refers to the tendency of humans to mate with others of similar physical and personality characteristics (Thiessen, Young, & Delgado, 1997). More generally, assortativeness is showing a preference for membership in a group whose members share a large number of characteristics. Affiliativeness refers to a nonconscious need to have close, friendly relationships with others (Koestner & McClelland, 1992). More generally, affiliativeness is showing a preference for including a wide range of people in one's social, organizational, political and military life. These traits can lead to maladaptive behaviors that may lead to failure in professional life, loss of income, and sometimes even loss of life. In the second section, we apply the model to the lives of actual stars who had public downfalls and examine whether some of the background factors and the maladaptive behaviors they engaged in fit the model. The lives of stars were assessed analyzing information from secondary sources.

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Importance of this study

One question that arises is: Is it worthwhile to investigate the downfall of a few rich and famous individuals? We assert that it is important. Beyond the value inherent in each of these individuals' own lives, these stars are central figures in producing, popularizing and re-enforcing important cultural values. Studies show that celebrities can influence peoples beliefs in areas such as political opinions (Veer, Becirovic, & Martin, 2010), consumption behaviors (Dix, Phau, & Pougnet, 2010), and health (Brown, Basil, & Bocarnea, 2003). They are role models to many individuals, especially the young adolescents of today. Giles and Maltby (2004) found that adolescents' "high emotional autonomy was a significant predictor of celebrity interest". They also found that high interest in celebrities was related to "low levels of security and closeness". Distefan, Pierce and Gilpin (2004) found that when non-smoking adolescents' favored stars that smoked on-screen, it predicted their risk of smoking later on. We propose that investigating why these influential figures engage in maladaptive behaviors will not only help in finding out ways to help these people, but may also indirectly help the general public who are influenced by them.

In light of claims in Giles & Maltby, (2004), that adolescents are highly influenced by celebrities, the present study seeks to raise awareness about the psychological factors involved in these stars' lives. This could provide guidance for fans, parents, and the general public. For example, the model could guide adolescents in their celebrity fandom experiences. As adolescents pursue information on their preferred celebrities, it is necessary to examine multiple dimensions of a star's life prior to deciding which stars are suitable role-models.

» FACTORS INVOLVED IN WHY STARS CRASH

In this section, we consult existing literature to assess the relationship between narcissistic personality traits and other personality problems related to stardom. We also discuss the role of early childhood experiences, such as abandonment and trauma, and social factors, such as assortativeness and affiliativeness. Then we discuss maladaptive behaviors associated with narcissistic traits. Finally, based on this literature review, we propose a theoretical model showing how stars crash.

Narcissistic tendencies among stars

There are a few studies that link narcissistic traits to stardom and seeking of stardom (e.g. Celedonia & Williams, 2006; Greenwood, Long, & Dal Cin, 2013; Young & Pinsky, 2006). Wrzos (1987) defined narcissism as "self-directed ego activity which generates affects that function to sustain the self-representation and regulate self-esteem." Most of the existing research on narcissism in stars has been with individuals who are post stardom. Young and Pinsky (2006) showed that celebrities tended to be more narcissistic than students pursuing a master's degree in Business Administration (MBA) and the larger population. However, this study found that narcissism scores did not vary with years of experience. Their findings suggest that narcissism existed prior to the entry of the stars into the industry, or that narcissism appeared early on in their career. Celedonia and Williams' (2006) study on the desire for fame and its relationship to personality

suggested that the desire for fame and narcissism were significantly related in their sample. A study on the appeal of fame in relationship to other factors including narcissism (Greenwood et al., 2013) found an association between narcissism and the "appeal of visibility and status," as well as a "perceived realism of future fame." From these studies, we infer and establish that narcissistic traits and stardom are associated, although which comes first is not clear from this literature.

Factors that may contribute to narcissism

Early environment of stars: Possible abandonment, trauma and overindulgent or absent wealthy parents. Early experiences of childhood abandonment and trauma, including parental death and divorce have been associated with personality problems, including narcissistic traits (Beatson, 1995; Brennan & Shaver, 1998; Mandelbaum, 1980; Marmar & Freeman, 1988; Mishne, 1979). Individuals with narcissistic disorders have shown to be characterized by their experience of severe emotional trauma and/or deprivation and neglect in infancy or early childhood. Childhood sexual or physical abuse, domestic violence, parental character pathology and intergenerational transmission of attachment patterns have been found as some of the etiological factors (Beatson, 1995; Hibbard, 1993).

Parental divorce during childhood has also been shown to be one of the contributors of narcissistic personality. Brennan and Shaver (1998) found that college students who experienced parental divorce in their childhood scored higher on narcissism scale than did those who did not experience parental divorce.

Research shows that having overindulgent, wealthy and famous parents may also be related to narcissism (Capron, 2004; Grinker, 1978). Capron (2004) found that individuals having parents who pampered them by being overindulgent was associated with overall narcissism and contributed to their sense of entitlement and exhibitionism. Grinker (1978) suggested that the little parental contact with children of wealthy parents leads to "shallow values and pathological narcissism." Based on this finding, one can infer that stars who grow up in families with famous, wealthy, overindulgent parents may not experience an optimal childhood experience.

As these pieces of evidence suggest that early life experiences are associated with narcissism, it is predicted that narcissistic stars may have had such early life experiences as well.

Social forces related to narcissism in stars. Two social forces of interest are *assortativeness* and *affiliativeness*.

Assortativeness refers to the tendency of humans to mate with others of similar physical and personality characteristics (Thiessen, Young, & Delgado, 1997). Assortativeness is also showing a preference for membership in a group whose members share a large number of characteristics. Bon et al. (2013) showed that their participants, including those who had extreme personality traits (scored very high on Cloninger's Temperament and Character Inventory (TCI)), preferred positive assortative mating (similarities) over complementarity (preferring to compensate for variations). Extending this concept of assortative mating to social relationships, we assume that stars also engage in positive assortative social relationships.

This assortative force may lead narcissistic stars to socialize with other narcissistic individuals. Freeman and Fox (2013) pointed out that narcissistic individuals are often raised in families where the available role models value important, powerful, and credible others. Thus, their narcissistic style and behavior are reinforced. From this we may infer that when narcissistic stars befriend other narcissistic individuals, they may create assortative friendships or relationships (e.g. relationships based asserting power and importance over others). Those narcissistic individuals reinforce the narcissistic characteristics in stars.

Assortative behavior may appear in the form of codependence such as stars engaging in maladaptive behaviors like drug abuse along with their friends or partners. Drug codependency can be considered a “self-centered and self-referential behavior”, and it may be indicative of the users’ need to receive attention from each other (Ronningstam & Gunderson, 1990). These two behaviors are characteristic of narcissists. Therefore, assortative friendships or relationships, such as codependency, are assumed to have an influence on narcissistic traits. Thus, it is predicted that assortative relationships lead narcissistic stars to socialize with other narcissistic individuals, who in turn, promote the stars’ narcissistic behaviors.

Affiliativeness is another social force that can be related to narcissism. Affiliativeness refers to the implicit affiliation motive (need for affiliation), which is defined as a nonconscious need to have close, friendly relationships with others (Koestner & McClelland, 1992). Studies have indicated that narcissism is related to affiliation (Ronningstam & Gunderson, 1990; Tanchotsrinon, Maneesri & Campbell, 2007) and affiliation is also associated with an increased appeal of fame (Greenwood et al., 2013). Individuals show a higher need for affiliation when they are faced with non-positive social stimuli (Kordik, Eska & Schultheiss, 2012). Individuals seeking stardom would face a lot of rejection. Hence, they may also seek more affiliation by showing a greater tendency to seek positive expressions from their social group. Stars tend to go as far as spending a lot of money on people in their social circle to be supported and accepted. This behavior of seeking positive expressions from others has been linked to narcissistic traits. A study by Tanchotsrinon et al. (2007) revealed that participants who were higher on narcissism showed more attraction to people who offered them “the potential for self-enhancement.” The need to receive admiration and reinforcement is a characteristic of narcissism (Ronningstam & Gunderson, 1990). Greenwood et al. (2013) showed that affiliation or ‘need to belong’ was associated with an increased appeal of fame. Thus, it can be inferred that unlike a common person’s need to belong, stars are expected to seek social approval from a much wider group of individuals, including strangers (fans, and everyone in the public). Seeking appreciation and fame from strangers in turn may influence narcissistic tendencies of the stars.

Adult environment of stars contributing to their narcissistic traits. Stars often have *clagues*. Traditionally, a *claque* was an organized body of professional applauders in French theatres and opera houses. Members of a *claque* are called *claqueurs*. Here, a *claque* includes managers, fans and a larger entourage who contribute

to narcissistic traits of the stars. They may submit to the stars’ demands or even to demands that they only infer. It is speculated that friends and assistants who submit to their demands may also contribute to their narcissistic traits. Having people in the *claque* who submit to unreasonable demands can feed an individual’s ego which reinforces that individual’s narcissistic traits. Tiebout (1994) shows that addicts in recovery must first surrender their “inflated ego” in order to recover. This indicates that the inflated ego (a characteristic of narcissism) is connected to addiction. It also allows one to infer that reinforcing the addictive behaviors will reinforce the ego, and vice versa. One can infer that satisfying maladaptive behaviors may reinforce the narcissists’ underlying issues, such as their need for admiration and sense of entitlement. Therefore, such individuals in a star’s social circle may play a role in reinforcing narcissism in the star. Many members of *clagues* often have borderline personality tendencies. These may be illustrated by their enmeshment with the stars. An example of this enmeshment that led to a bad outcome may be seen in the case of Selena Quintanilla-Pérez. She was murdered by Yolanda Saldívar, a Selena Etc. clothing boutique manager, who had been her fan-club president until she was fired for embezzlement three weeks earlier (“New Album from Selena Quintanilla 17 Years After Her Death,” 2012). Yolanda was in Selena’s *claque* and had borderline tendencies, such as, claiming to love Selena like a daughter and being obsessed, but ended up murdering her.

Research also shows that narcissists tend to stay close to friends who are non-threatening (Nicholls & Stukas, 2011). This may be another way in which stars maintain their narcissism, another type of remaining close to individuals who satisfy their ego. Nicholls and Stukas (2011) found that participants who were higher on narcissism decreased their closeness to their friends when faced with a threat from that person.

Effects of being a narcissistic star

Narcissism has been linked to a number of maladaptive behaviors. Previous research indicates that narcissism is related to making bad investments and losing money. Lakey, Rose and Campbell (2008) showed that narcissism is related to “gambling-related pathology.” Foster, Reidy, Misra and Goff (2011) found that narcissists, in their study, made riskier stock market investments and lost more money. Furthermore, many star athletes emerge from difficult backgrounds and rise to great stardom and wealth, but are incapable of managing this new lifestyle or money (Manfred, 2013). From these studies, it can be inferred that narcissistic stars are inclined to making investments or expenditure that lead to substantial financial loss.

Narcissism has also been linked to problems in one’s interpersonal relationships. Roche et al. (2012) found that pathological narcissism (grandiosity and vulnerability) was “reflective of interpersonal dysfunction.” One might expect to see problematic attachments in narcissistic individuals’ interpersonal relationships, close friendships, or marriages. It is predicted that many narcissistic stars tend to have failed relationships as well.

Narcissism has also been shown to predict alcohol and drug abuse. Narcissism has been shown to predict alcohol use in college-aged students (Luhtanen & Crocker, 2005). Likewise,

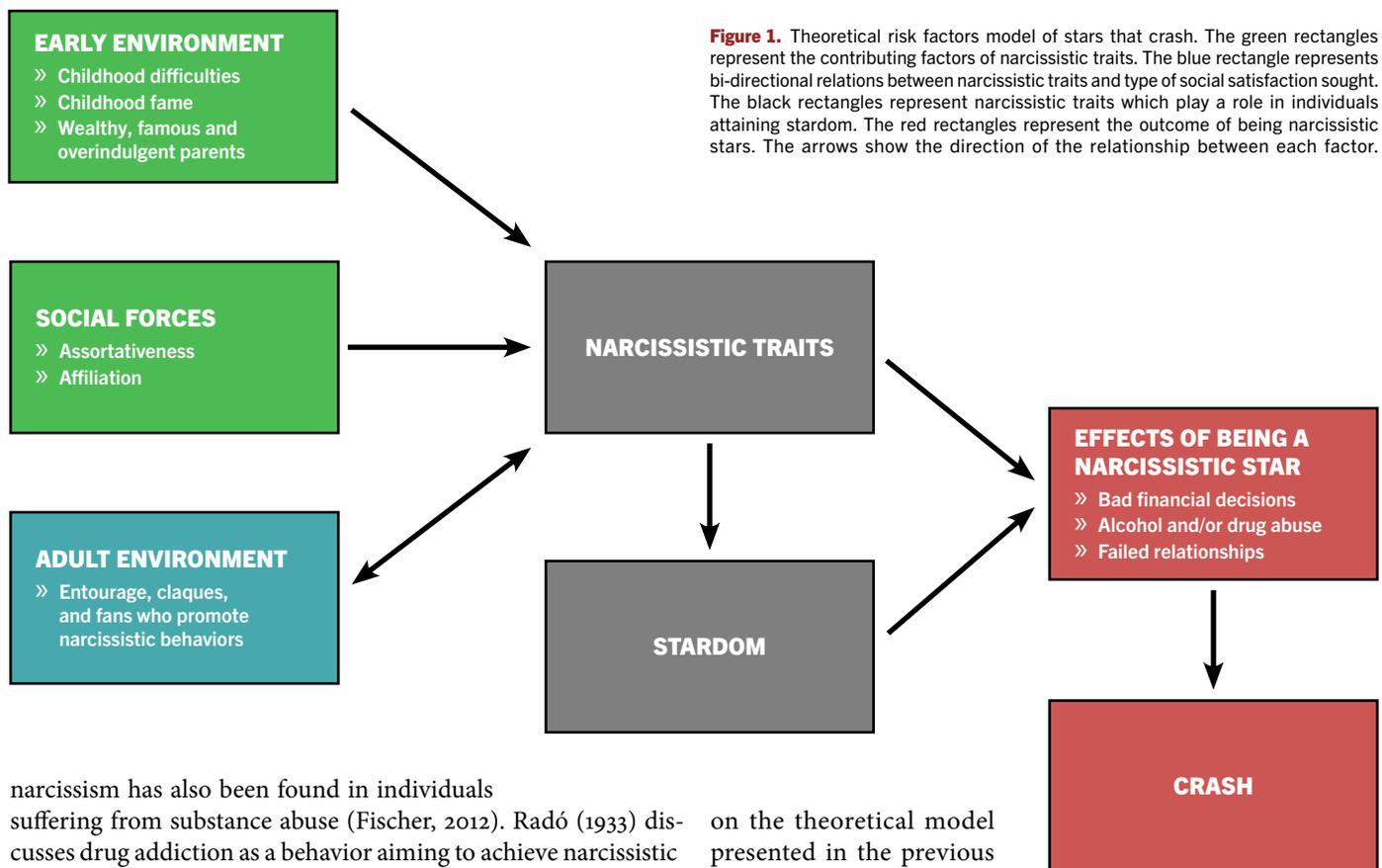


Figure 1. Theoretical risk factors model of stars that crash. The green rectangles represent the contributing factors of narcissistic traits. The blue rectangle represents bi-directional relations between narcissistic traits and type of social satisfaction sought. The black rectangles represent narcissistic traits which play a role in individuals attaining stardom. The red rectangles represent the outcome of being narcissistic stars. The arrows show the direction of the relationship between each factor.

narcissism has also been found in individuals suffering from substance abuse (Fischer, 2012). Radó (1933) discusses drug addiction as a behavior aiming to achieve narcissistic pleasure. One may expect to see narcissistic traits as an influence on the stars' use of substances.

Stars, who are narcissistic, are also vulnerable to alcohol and drug abuse. Schaller (1997) showed that an increase in fame was associated with higher alcohol use. It is also common to see stars in therapy or drug rehabilitation centers ("Celebrities in rehab: Stars who battled addiction and more," 2013). Thus, alcohol and drug abuse may be common outcomes of being a narcissistic star.

The model

The proposed model in Figure 1 is a risk factor model that summarizes what leads stars to crash. According to the proposed model, early childhood environment (childhood trauma, abandonment, poverty or wealth) and social forces (assortativeness and affiliativeness) are risk factors that contribute to narcissistic traits in stars. Another risk factor is having entourages and clagues who help maintain narcissistic traits. As a result of narcissism and stardom, stars engage in maladaptive behaviors such as bad financial decisions, alcohol and drug abuse, and relationship problems. These maladaptive behaviors in turn become risk factors for a crash. The greater the number of risk factors, the more likely it is for the stars to crash. Outcomes of crashing may include death, bankruptcy, addiction and substantial damage to career or relationships with significant others.

» THE STUDY

The current study assesses cases of stars who have crashed. Using a variety of archival sources, it examined their early childhood experiences, social forces, social circle and maladaptive behaviors. Based

on the theoretical model presented in the previous section, we hypothesize that:

1. Stars who have crashed have had early childhood experiences of trauma, abandonment, poverty or extreme wealth.
2. Stars who have crashed engaged in assortative relationships and affiliative behaviors.
3. Stars who have crashed had entourages who supported their narcissistic characteristics.
4. Stars who have crashed have engaged in maladaptive behaviors such as making bad financial decisions, alcohol or drug abuse and relationship problems.
5. The number of risk factors present and the severity of downfall are positively correlated.

» METHOD

Participants

A convenience sample of 18 cases of famous and wealthy individuals, who either lost their status as stars or their lives, was examined. The individuals came from a range of professions that vary from politics to sports to the entertainment business. Specifically, there were 3 politicians, 7 actors or actresses, 3 rock musicians, 1 jazz musician, 1 comedian, 1 rapper, and 2 athletes. Based on the model, all the 18 cases are assumed to have narcissistic traits.

Procedure

Online sources, articles, and interviews about the personal lives of 18 celebrities who succeeded and eventually fell in the public eye were collected. They were coded for common categories

across the stories using a deductive approach. This method began with the hypothesized categories, and then set out to validate or verify the categories as they appeared across the available sources. We altered the codes throughout the process by combining similar codes into larger categories. For example, childhood abuse, childhood poverty and childhood abandonment were categorized under childhood difficulties. The final codes generated were childhood difficulties, childhood wealth or fame, adult environment, drugs or alcohol abuse, bad financial decisions, and relationship problems. After creating the list of codes, the case biographies were re-examined for directional connections between the categories. The childhood difficulties category included the following conditions: abusive caregivers, abandonment, financial hardships, parental divorce, death or absence of a parent, alcoholic parent(s), imprisoned parent(s), and moving around, for example: being raised in foster homes. Childhood wealth or fame was categorized by having wealthy parents or an early career. The adult environment category included: others who were seeking financial benefits from the star, friends or family who supplied drugs, and drug codependency. The social forces category included: overspending on others (affiliation), codependency (assortativeness), and trying to impress others. Drug or alcohol abuse reported whether they used drugs or alcohol. Bad financial decisions included those who were reported overspending money on others or making investments that led to substantial financial loss. Relationship problems included having had one or more divorces, the failure of a serious relationship, spousal abuse, extramarital affairs, and one report of a murdered girlfriend. Narcissism in the stars was not assessed because it was not possible due to the nature of subjects analyzed in this study.

» RESULTS

The following analyses were performed. First, prevalence of each factor in the cases analyzed will be reported. Then the kind of downfalls will be presented. Finally, the correlation analysis of the number of factors present and severity of the outcome (downfall) will be reported. It is assumed that the stars examined had some narcissistic tendencies.

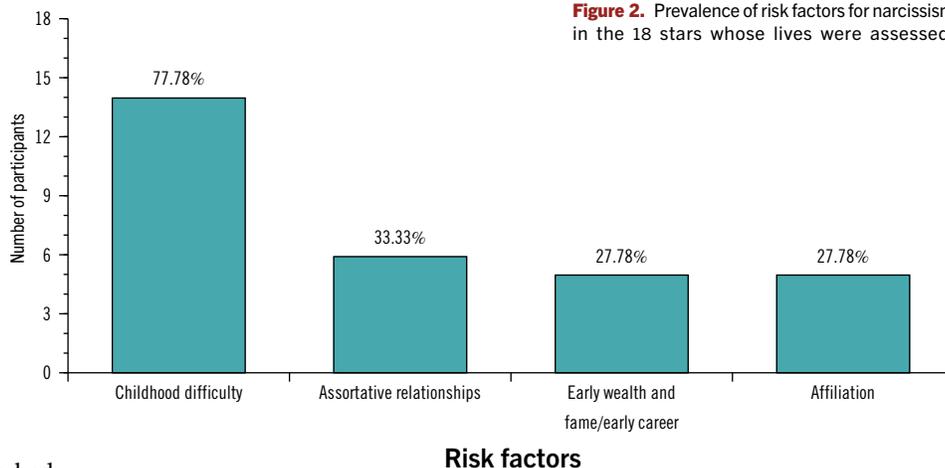


Figure 2. Prevalence of risk factors for narcissism in the 18 stars whose lives were assessed.

Prevalence of factors

All 18 stars whose lives were assessed, either had childhood difficulty (77.78%) or childhood wealth and fame or early career (27.78%). Approximately, 33.33% of these individuals engaged in assortative relationships or affiliation and 27.78% had entourages or people in their social circle, who supported their narcissistic characteristics reinforcing their narcissism. This is represented in a bar diagram in Figure 2. Figure 3 shows that a majority (55.56%) of the stars had two of the three outcomes of being a narcissistic star, 5.56% had all three, 22.23% had one and 5.56% had none. Majority of them (88.89%) had failed relationships, 11.11% made bad financial decisions and 61.11% of the stars abused alcohol and/or drugs. Table 1 details the presence and absence of each variable for each star whose cases were analyzed in this study. Given that this group of stars does show significant percentages of people that exhibit the factors that are discussed, each factor will now be discussed in more detail below.

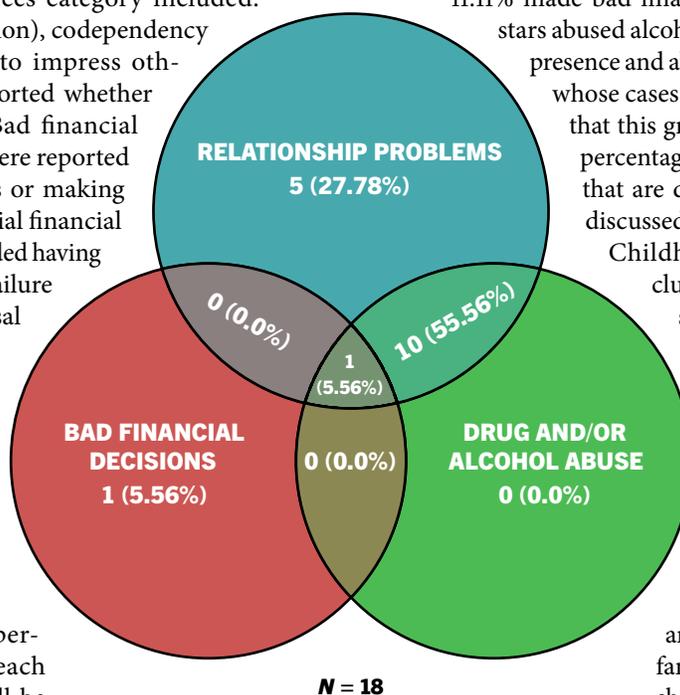


Figure 3. Venn diagram showing prevalence of overlaps between the three outcomes of being narcissistic stars among the 18 stars whose lives were examined. The blue circle represents the set of stars who had relationship problems. The orange circle represents the set of stars who made bad financial decisions and the green circle represents the set of stars who abuse drugs and/or alcohol. 10 stars had both relationship problems and abused drugs and/or alcohol and 16 stars had relationship problems. One of the stars did not have either of the problems.

Childhood difficulties or traumas, including abuse, affected 14 of the 18 stars (or 77.78%). To show how childhood difficulties may have affected the lives of the stars, we will share some examples detailing the type of difficulties they experienced. Lindsay Lohan, for example, struggled with an alcoholic father (“Lindsay Lohan Biography,” 2013), who also went to prison for assault and other charges; Richard Nixon’s family struggled with financial hardships (“Biography of Richard Milhous Nixon,” 2013); Elvis Presley grew up in poverty (Anderson, 1978); Marilyn Monroe was abused, and was moved around to different foster homes (“Marilyn Monroe Biography,” 2013); James Dean’s mother died when he was nine years old (“James

Table 1. Historical or concomitant conditions (risk factors) associated with downfall (input)

Name	Profession	Difficult childhood	Childhood wealth/fame	Adult environment	Social forces	Drugs/ alcohol	Bad financial decisions	Relationship problems
Bill Clintoni	Politician	Abusive stepfather	No	Not enough info		No	Not enough info	Affair
Charlie Parkerii	Jazz musician	Abandoned by father	No	Not enough info		Yes	Not enough info	3 divorces
Charlie Sheeniii	Actor	No	Parents were wealthy actors Early career	Others seeking financial benefits	Spending a lot of money on people in his social circle (affiliation)	Yes	Overspending on entourage	3 divorces
Elvis Presleyiv	Rock musician	Grew up poor	No	Entourage/fans. Also had people seeking financial benefits.	Spending a lot of money on people in his social circle (affiliation)	Yes	Not enough info	1 divorce
Heath Ledgerv	Actor	Parents divorced when he was 11 years old	No	Not enough info		Yes	Not enough info	Serious relationship ended
James Deanvi	Actor	Mother died (9 years old)	No		Trying to impress a girl (affiliation)	No	Not enough info	Never married
John Edwardsvii	Politician	Financial hardships	No	Not enough info		No	Not enough info	Affair
Judy Garlandviii	Actress	No	Early career Professional parents	Not enough info		Yes	Not enough info	4 divorces
Kurt Cobainix	Rock musician	Parents divorced when he was 9	No	Not enough info	Drug codependency - assortativeness	Yes	Not enough info	Abuse/drugs
Lenny Brucex	Comedian	Parents Divorced (5 years old)	No	Not enough info		Yes	Not enough info	Divorce
Lindsay Lohanxi	Actress/singer	Alcoholic father Father went to prison	Early career Wealthy parents	Not enough info		Yes	Not enough info	Never married
Magic Johnsonxii	Athlete	financial hardships teased by neighborhood kids	No	Not enough info		No	Not enough info	Affair (indicated by his AIDs)
Marilyn Monroexiii	Actress	Fatherless; moved around foster homes and orphanages	No	Not enough info		Yes	Not enough info	3 divorces
MC Hammerxiv	Rapper	Father was a gambler Financial Problems	No	Others seeking financial benefits	Spending a lot of money on people in his social circle (affiliation)	No	Overspending on entourage	None
Richard Nixonxv	Politician	Financial hardships	No	Not enough info		No	Not enough info	None
Rick Nelsonxvi	Actor	No	Early career Parents were wealthy actors	Manager supplied him with cocaine		Yes	Not enough info	Divorce
Sid Viciousxvii	Rock musician	Absent father Death of stepfather	No	Mother supplied drugs	Drugs codependency with girlfriend and manager (assortativeness)	Yes	Not enough info	Girlfriend was murdered
Tiger Woodsxviii	Athlete	No	Early career	Not enough info		No	Not enough info	Affair

Dean Biography,” 2013b); Charlie Parker’s father abandoned his family when he was young (“Charlie Parker Biography,” 2013); Heath Ledger experienced parental divorce when he was 11 years old (“Heath Ledger Biography,” 2013); and Bill Clinton had an alcoholic stepfather who abused his mother and half-brother (“Bill Clinton Biography,” 2013a).

Childhood wealth and/or an early career were prevalent in 5 out of the 18 cases. Charlie Sheen had famous, wealthy parents and a successful career that then ended with addiction and drug abuse. He began his acting career at the age of nine (“Charlie Sheen Biography,” 2013). Rick Nelson also had famous parents, as he began his career by joining his parents’ show and following in their footsteps (“Rick Nelson Biography,” 2013). Lindsay Lohan’s parents were former actors who helped launch her career at a very young age (“Lindsay Lohan Biography,” 2013). Judy Garland also began her acting career at a young age, with her first movie contract at the age of 13 (“Judy Garland Biography,” 2013). The fame and career of the stars’ parents, and/or the early beginning to their own career means that they had atypical childhoods. Stars like Tiger Woods may have had a childhood without abuse or traumas, but he did not have a regular childhood. Tiger Woods underwent intensive training at a young age, and devoted his time to developing his athletic skills. He participated in tournaments at the young age of eight (“Tiger Woods Biography,” 2013b). He also prioritized his career over his education by leaving Princeton University after two years (“Tiger Woods,” 2013).

Social forces such as affiliation and assortative relationships were prevalent in six out of the 18 stars who were studied. Behaviors such as trying to impress specific people, the general public and spending a lot of money on others were coded as engagement in affiliation. Drug codependency was coded as presence of assortative relationship. Four of the cases showed a need for affiliation and two cases showed an assortative need. Elvis Presley and Rick Nelson sought social approval and thus engaged in affiliation. The analysis revealed that Elvis Presley’s entourage influenced his overspending behavior as he spent a lot of money on his friends and associates (Anderson, 1978). Elvis Presley sought social approval from his fans throughout his career as he worked to appear in films (“Elvis Presley Biography,” 2013). Rick Nelson started his first label after having told a girl that he was going to do that, so he started the label in order to seek social approval and prove that he could do it (“Ricky Nelson,” 2013). Courtney Love and Kurt Cobain on the other hand used drugs together (“Kurt Cobain Biography,” 2013) showing codependency and thus engaging in an assortative relationship.

Slightly under 1/3 (5 of the 18) stars who were studied had individuals in their adult environment who reinforced their narcissistic characteristics. Three of the cases (Charlie Sheen, Elvis Presley and M. C. Hammer) examined had people in their entourage or friends who were seeking financial benefits, and two (Rick Nelson and Sid Vicious) had “friends” or family members supplying them with drugs or using drugs with them.

The stars’ marital problems appeared to be a theme across almost all of the cases. A few of the stars examined had supportive families and close relationships, and many had children, but were unable to remain committed due to addictions (e.g. Rick

Nelson) or infidelity (e.g. Tiger Woods). Seven of the eighteen cases (e.g. Charlie Sheen) had failed marriages that ended with one or more divorces. In one case (Heath Ledger), a serious relationship failed. Four of these stars had three or more divorces. Others either remained in marriages after having affairs (e.g. Bill Clinton) or abusing the spouse or never married (e.g. Lindsay Lohan). Two of the cases had happy marriages (e.g. M. C. Hammer) with no reports of marital problems. The results show that the narcissism that some stars experience had an effect on their personal relationships and made them less capable of having successful marriages and commitments.

The study also found some of the stars who were studied, such as M. C. Hammer and Elvis Presley, made bad financial decisions, especially through reckless spending on their entourage. They loved to spend money on their “friends” and staff, but the outcome proved to be unaffordable for M. C. Hammer as it led to his bankruptcy (Brookes, 2013; “M. C. Hammer Biography,” 2013; “Elvis Presley Biography,” 2013). The need to overspend is problematic due to the social factors involved (needing to behave this way in order to receive acceptance and self-verification).

Eleven out of the eighteen stars had drug or alcohol problems. In the case of Lindsay Lohan, alcohol was also a factor in the “childhood difficulties” (alcoholic parent) category. Eight of the cases had drug-related deaths (e.g. Judy Garland). Rick Nelson died in a plane crash, but had traces of cocaine and marijuana in his blood (“Rick Nelson Biography,” 2013). Charlie Sheen and Lindsay Lohan struggle with alcoholism (“Charlie Sheen Biography,” 2013). Drugs and alcohol appear as an immediate threat to the stars, leading to the actual “crash” through a fatal overdose, or indirectly affecting the decisions of the stars (such as Rick Nelson). Table 2 shows the types of downfalls that the stars experienced.

Outcomes/downfall

Seven categories of intermediate or final downfalls emerged. They were political lies, extramarital affairs, bankruptcy, problems due to drugs and alcohol addiction, accidental death due to poor judgment, drug related deaths and suicide. Table 2 lists the stars who fell under each of these categories.

Table 2 shows that 10 of the 18 stars died. Kurt Cobain committed suicide (“Kurt Cobain Biography,” 2013), whereas James Dean died in a fatal car accident due to speeding in a racing car (“James Dean Biography,” 2013) and Rick Nelson died in a plane crash as he was flying on a 41 year old private plane that had had mechanical problems before (“Ricky Nelson,” 2013). The rest of the stars who died, had drug related deaths.

Among the stars who did not die, their intermediate downfalls (drug and/or alcohol addiction, political lies, bankruptcy and extramarital affairs) had varied levels of impact on their careers. Tiger Woods’ extra marital affairs with multiple partners not only led to a divorce with his wife, but also led to loss of many endorsements, a break in his golf career and a drop in his rankings from number 1 to as low as 58 (“Tiger to Suffer,” 2009; “Elin Nordegren on Tiger Woods,” 2010; “Tiger Woods Is Back, 2013). Bill Clinton was impeached by the House of Representatives for a perjury and obstruction of justice for lying about having a sexual relationship with Monica Lewinsky under oath (“Impeachment: The Overview,”

Table 2. Types of downfall (outcomes) experienced by the stars

Drugs and alcohol	Accidental death due to poor judgment	Drug-related deaths	Suicide	Political lies	Bankruptcy	Extramarital affairs
Charlie Sheen Lindsay Lohan	James Dean (car crash) Rick Nelson (plane crash)	Judy Garland Marilyn Monroe Elvis Presley Charlie Parker Heath Ledger Sid Vicious Lenny Bruce	Kurt Cobain (+drugs)	Richard Nixon John Edwards	MC Hammer	Bill Clinton Tiger Woods Magic Johnson John Edwards

1998). Although he was acquitted and continued his term in the office, he was only the second President in the history of the United States to be impeached (“The Senate Acquits,” 1999). Magic Johnson was infected with HIV due to having sexual intercourse with multiple partners and not taking proper precautions (“Magic Johnson Biography,” 2013). It cost him his career in basketball as he retired after finding out about having the virus. John Edwards was accused of using his campaign money to hide his affair and his illegitimate child (“John Edward Pleads,” 2011). His political career came to a halt following his sex scandal and the following trials (“Another Comeback Kid?” 2013). M. C. Hammer declared bankruptcy six years after the success of his album *Hammer* (“M. C. Hammer Biography,” 2013). Although he continued with his career, he was not able to regain the kind of success he had in his initial years. Charlie Sheen’s personality including drug and alcohol abuse led to a conflict with the creator of the series, *Two and a Half Men* (“Charlie Sheen Biography,” 2013). This cost him his lead role in the series. He was banned from the production lot and the remaining four seasons of the show were canceled. Lindsey Lohan was arrested for driving under influence and sent to drug rehabilitation several times in the course of six years (“Lindsey Lohan Talks,” 2013). The report states that her career began to dwindle following her arrests in 2007. Richard Nixon was the only US president to resign from his presidency as his administration tried to cover up its involvement in breaking in at the Democratic National Committee headquarters at the Watergate office complex in Washington D. C. (“Richard M. Nixon,” 2013).

Correlation between severity of downfall and number of factors present

The types of downfalls, intermediate and final, were rated from 1 to 7 based on their severity by the authors. The ratings of the outcomes are shown in table 3. A correlational analysis was performed on the severity of downfall and the number of factors present. Some of the downfalls and factors associated with downfalls were correlated (i.e., drug and alcohol addiction, bankruptcy and extramarital affairs). If the type of downfall matched with one of the factors associated with the downfall, the respective factor was not included while determining the number of factors. The results showed that severity of downfall was significantly correlated with the number of factors associated with the downfall, $r = 0.748, p < 0.001$.

Table 3. Severity of downfalls (1-least severe, 7-most severe)

Downfall type	Rank
Political lies	1
Extramarital affairs	2
Bankruptcy	3
Drugs and/or alcohol addiction	4
Accidental death due to recklessness	5
Drug-related deaths	6
Suicide	7

» DISCUSSION

The results support the proposed model as three of the five hypotheses were supported and two were partially supported. The results supported the first hypothesis that stars who have crashed have had early childhood experiences of trauma, abandonment, poverty and/or extreme wealth. All of the stars assessed either had childhood difficulties or came from a family with extreme wealth and fame or had early careers.

The second hypothesis that stars who have crashed engaged in assortative relationships/affiliation and the third which states that stars had entourages who supported their narcissistic characteristics were both partially supported, in that roughly one third of the stars showed these effects: a) 33% of the stars whose cases were assessed engaged in assortative relationships and affiliation and b) 27.78% had individuals in their adult environment who reinforced their narcissistic traits.

The fourth hypothesis, that stars who have crashed have engaged in maladaptive behaviors such as making bad financial decisions, alcohol and drug abuse and relationship problems, was supported by the results as 17 out of the 18 stars engaged in at least one of the three maladaptive behaviors and 11 out of the 18 stars engaged in two of the three.

The final hypothesis that the greater the number of risk factors present in the stars, the higher the severity of their downfall, was also supported. The correlational analysis showed a significant positive correlation between the number of risk factors and severity of the downfall. This supports the risk factor model of stars crashing proposed in this study.

Most stars do not crash

Not all stars who have atypical childhoods (difficult childhood, early fame, extremely wealthy or famous family) crash. Barbra Streisand, Oprah Winfrey, Madonna, Natalie Portman and other famous figures managed to survive their stardom without crashing.

Oprah Winfrey came from a background of abuse and poverty (“Oprah Winfrey Biography,” 2013). Natalie Portman was a child star (“Natalie Portman,” 2013). Yet, they rose to success. A logical explanation would be that the resiliency found in people like Oprah Winfrey and Natalie Portman can be attributed to the lack of narcissism in their personalities. Both Oprah and Natalie do not appear to have narcissistic behaviors. Oprah was able to create firm boundaries between herself and her staff

or entourage. Oprah is a philanthropist who devotes her life to the aid of others through charities and activism, even after achieving great success and fame (“Oprah Winfrey Biography,” 2013). Natalie prioritized other aspects of her life over fame. She was able to attend regular schools and live a normal childhood. That seems to have prevented her from developing narcissistic behavior. These examples make a good case that narcissism could be the key factor that leads stars to crash and that atypical childhood alone is not sufficient.

Implications

The proposed model suggests risk factors for why certain people are susceptible to crashing, while others in similar situations remain successful. The factors found in the present analysis would be useful in designing interventions for celebrities with behavioral problems. Interventions should consider the impact of social forces on the stars’ behaviors. They should also approach the root of the behavior, narcissism, rather than only treating the observable problems of drug and alcohol abuse as isolated events.

Individuals interested in obtaining fame would benefit from these findings as a cautionary measure that may prepare them for the risks that accompany the life of a famous star.

Limitations

Although the proposed model shows narcissism as the key factor in leading stars to crash, the study could not directly assess prevalence of narcissistic traits in the stars whose lives were assessed. This was mainly because of geographical distance or death of the stars being studied. The study assumed that the stars being studied had narcissistic tendencies. There is enough anecdotal information to support the assumption that certain celebrities are narcissistic. This assumption is also supported by research literature that was discussed earlier in the paper.

Another limitation was that it is difficult to obtain biographical information on stars in general. The ones that are of interest to the public, and therefore have detailed biographies, are often the ones who have had troubled lives. Because of the nature of the population group being studied in this paper, the paper used secondary sources to analyze the lives of the participants. Conducting interviews and administering surveys/instruments to examine the variables of interest was not possible.

Another difficulty we faced in this study was discerning a few risk factors such as drug or alcohol abuse, relationship problems and bad financial decisions from intermediate outcomes such as drug addition, political lies, extramarital affairs and bankruptcy. In a descriptive naturalistic study such as this one, it is not possible to control all the variables. The variables studied were a chain of events. Sometimes, the event is an outcome and sometimes it is a cause. What is a risk factor and what is an outcome depends on where one looks in the chain that exists in reality. To minimize the effects of this problem, in the correlational analysis, the association between numbers of risk factors present and the severity of outcomes, the risk factors that overlapped with the outcomes were excluded.

Direction for future research

Future research can also expand on this study by studying a larger number of cases. It would also be extremely useful to study the stars that do not crash. What sets them apart? Future research might use statistical methods to compare the circumstances of stars that crash to those who do not.

If possible, it would be helpful to do a longitudinal study of stars assessing their narcissism by administering instruments. An interesting addition would also include an examination of stars who were dealing with severe problems, but managed to recover and remain in or return to stardom. ■

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