Narcissism is a human personality trait that shows promise in partially explaining individuals’ departure from solid ethical judgment. Narcissists tend to ignore the rules and norms that govern the behavior of others and to attain personal goals at the expense of others. Previous work demonstrates that the effects of religiosity and Christian beliefs on ethical judgment are moderated by an individual’s level of narcissism.

In this study, we extend our investigation of narcissism, religiosity, and orthodox beliefs to assess whether the effects on ethical judgment depend on whether the ethical violation is attributed to the respondent or to someone else. We hypothesize that those high in narcissism, regardless of their religious orientation, will evince more severe judgment on others than on themselves, express more certainty about their judgment of others, and be less willing to forgive ethical violations by others than themselves. Such findings have implications for whether those with high narcissistic leanings should be placed in positions of organizational authority over others. Moreover, we hypothesize interaction effects based on respondents’ attitudes toward business—since our ethical scenarios deal with ethical decision-making in business and consumer ethics—with harsher ethical judgments assessed by respondents who also express negative attitudes toward business.