



# WHEN **BAD** IS GOOD

THE CASE FOR MORE BAD LEADERSHIP IN STUDENT  
LEADERSHIP AND ETHICAL DEVELOPMENT

**Cody Parish** (he/him)

Program Director of the Chancellor's  
Leadership Class and *UCCSlead*



University of Colorado  
Colorado Springs



# ● What is UCCSlead?

- A **FREE** extracurricular leadership development program open to all UCCS students.
- **Mission**: To develop ethical, world-changing leaders.
- **Events**:
  - Game Changer
  - Day of Service
  - Specialized Workshops



\*\*text LEAD to 71444 for regular updates on leadership opportunities





**32%**

**50%**





**32%**

Percentage of 25-year-olds who have had leadership development training

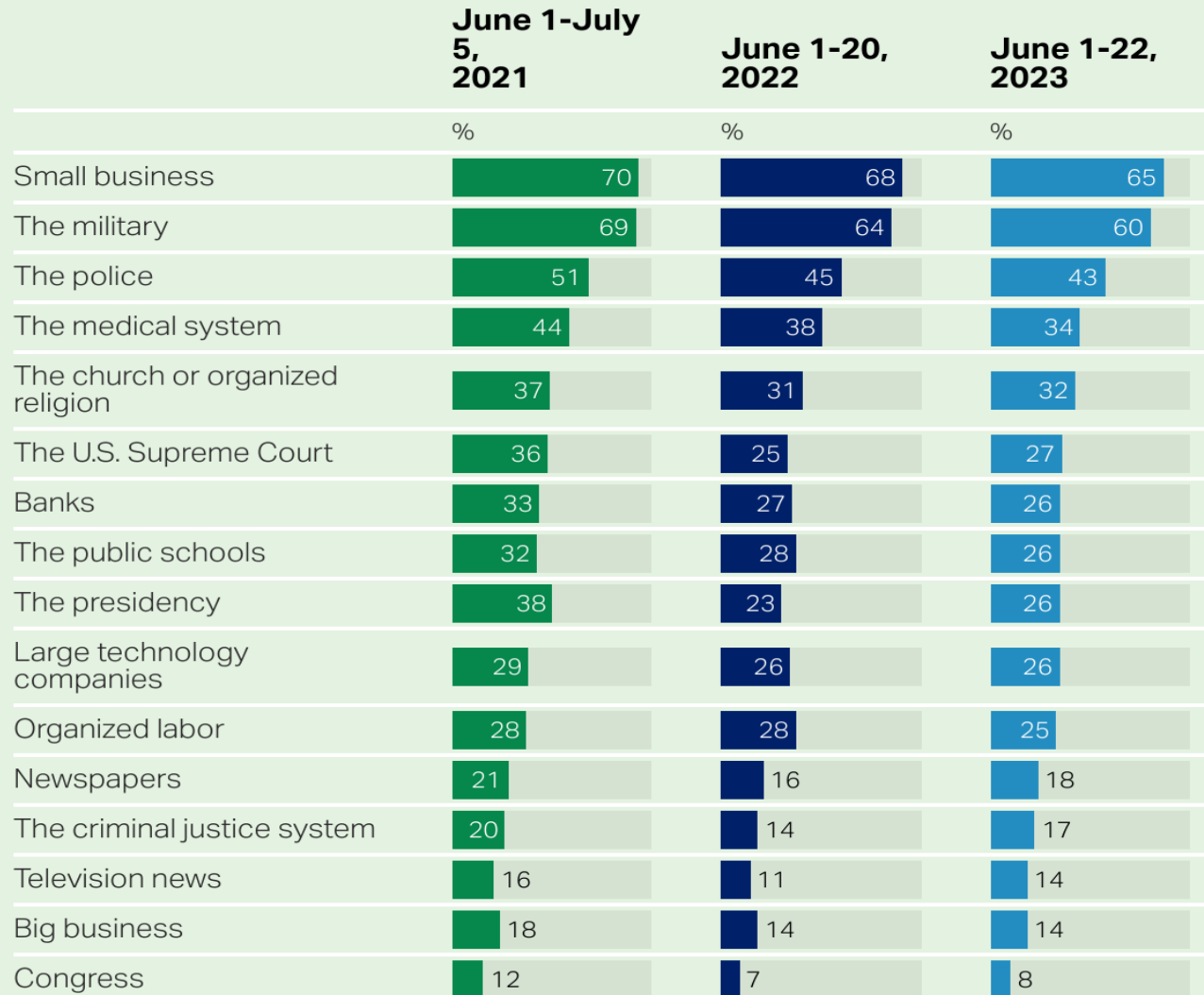
**50%**

Percentage of leadership development training that yielded long-term impact



## Recent Trend in Americans' Confidence in Institutions

% Great deal/Quite a lot of confidence in each institution



# ● **Bad** Leadership in Leadership Studies

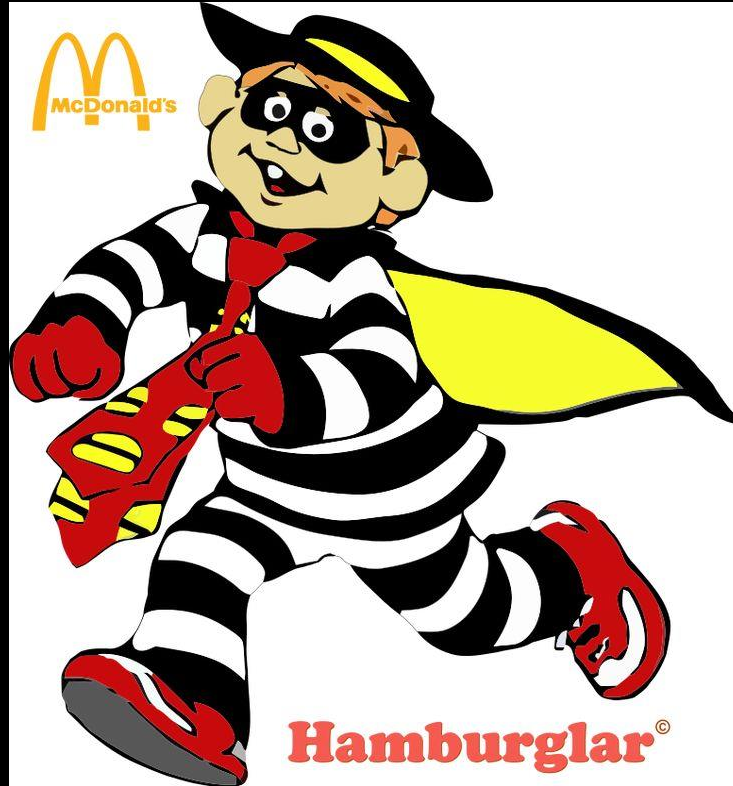
- **Assumption:** “... to become a leader is to become a *good* leader” (Kellerman, *Bad Leadership*, 7, emphasis mine)
- Platitudes of Bad Leadership



“Hitler’s Ghost” (Barbara Kellerman)



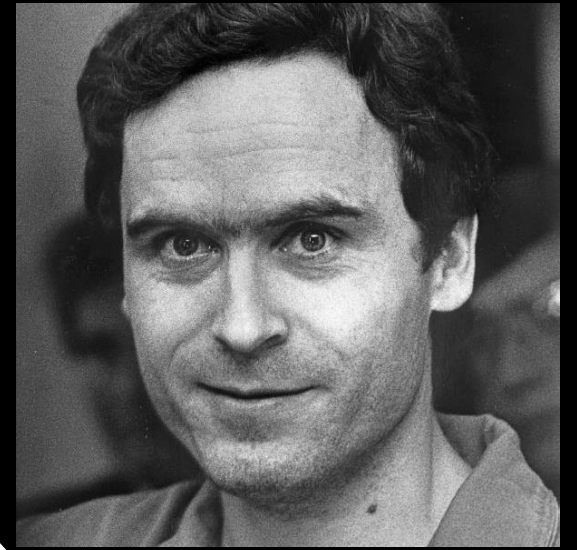
# The Allure of the **Dark Side**



Approximate rendering of my  
childhood dream career



# CULT OF THE KILLER





Essays  
on Evil in  
Popular Media

# Vader, Voldemort and Other Villains

EDITED BY Jamey Heit

## The Allure of the **Dark Side** *continued*

- Daniel A. Forbes calls the appeal of villainy “the aesthetic of evil” (14):
  - Evil / bad begs explanation (14)
  - Sympathy with villains “suggests the distinction between good and [bad] is not as clear-cut” (16)
  - Distinctions between good and evil may result from differences in ideological perspective and goals (16)
  - Evil / bad serves as a guide for how to be good (Heit 9)



# ● 7 Paradigms of **Bad** Leadership

1. Incompetent
2. Rigid
3. Intemperate
4. Callous
5. Corrupt
6. Insular
7. Evil

# BAD

## LEADERSHIP

*What It Is,  
How It  
Happens,  
Why It  
Matters*

BARBARA  
KELLERMAN

HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL PRESS



# DANIELS FUND ETHICS INITIATIVE

## PRINCIPLES

### *Integrity*

Act with honesty in all situations

### *Trust*

Build trust in all stakeholder relationships

### *Accountability*

Accept responsibility for all decisions

### *Transparency*

Maintain open and truthful communications

### *Fairness*

Engage in fair competition and create equitable  
and just relationships

### *Respect*

Honor the rights, freedoms, views, and property of others

### *Rule of Law*

Comply with the spirit and intent of laws and regulations

### *Viability*

Create long-term value for all relevant stakeholders







# CASE STUDY

THANOS' "THE SNAP"  
*AVENGERS: INFINITY  
WAR (2018)*



# THANOS' "THE SNAP"



- The Avengers and Guardians of the Galaxy join forces to prevent Thanos from gathering the six Infinity Stones into his gauntlet and eliminating half of all life with one snap of his fingers.
- Thanos wishes to balance the universe after seeing the destructive effects of unsustainable population growth on his home planet, Titan.







# *THANOS*' "MAD MAN" CLIP





# *THANOS*' "THE SNAP" CLIP



# ● Evaluation & Discussion



- In small groups of 2-3 people, discuss the following:
  - Which of Kellerman's 7 Paradigms of Bad Leadership does Thanos exemplify?
  - Which of the Daniels Fund Ethical Principles does Thanos follow and abandon through "The Snap"?
  - What leadership lessons can we learn from Thanos' actions?







# More **Bad** Leadership!



- Employ more **bad leadership examples** in your curriculum to engage student leaders—it's fun!
- Utilize **Kellerman's 7 Paradigms** and the **DFEI ethical principles** to facilitate meaningful examination of bad leadership



# Questions or Comments?

# ● Works Cited

- *Avengers: Infinity War*. Directed by Anthony Russo and Joe Russo, Walt Disney Studios, 2018.
- Center for Expanding Leadership and Opportunity (CELO)
- Forbes, Daniel A. “The Aesthetic of Evil.” *Vader, Voldemort and Other Villains: Essays on Evil in Popular Media*, edited by Jamey Heit, McFarland, 2011, pp. 3-11.
- Heit, Jamey. “Introduction.” *Vader, Voldemort and Other Villains: Essays on Evil in Popular Media*, edited by Jamey Heit, McFarland, 2011, pp. 13-27.
- Kellerman, Barbara. *Bad Leadership: What It Is, How It Happens, Why It Matters*. Harvard Business Review Press, 2004.
- ---. *Leadership from Bad to Worse: What Happens When Bad Festers*. Oxford UP, 2024.
- Saad, Lydia. “Historically Low Faith in U.S. Institutions Continues.” *Gallup*, 6 July 2023, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/508169/historically-low-faith-institutions-continues.aspx>. Accessed 2 Dec. 2024.
- Zhao, Daniel. “Glassdoor Worklife Trends 2025.” *Glassdoor*, 19 Nov. 2024, <https://www.glassdoor.com/blog/worklife-trends-2025/#Trend3>. Accessed 2 Dec. 2024.

