




# A database of CEO turnover and dismissal in S&P 1500 firms, 2000–2018

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## Abstract

**Research Summary:** We introduce an open-source dataset documenting the reasons for CEO departure in S&P 1500 firms from 2000 through 2018. In our dataset, we code for various forms of voluntary and involuntary departure. We compare our dataset to three published datasets in the CEO succession literature to assess both the qualitative and quantitative differences among them and to explore how these differences impact empirical findings associated with the performance-CEO dismissal relationship. The dataset includes eight different classifications for CEO turnover, a narrative description of each departure event, and links to sources used in constructing the narrative so that future researchers can validate or adapt the coding. The resulting data are available at (<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4543893>).

**Managerial Summary:** This article describes the development of an open-source database of all CEO dismissals and departures in the S&P 1500 between 2000 and 2018. Prior research on CEO turnover either does not capture the cause of departure or has coded the event independently, leading to inconsistencies and a lack of transparency in coding schemes. This has made

it difficult to generate knowledge on the causes and consequences of CEO dismissal. We describe how we developed the database, and we explore how our dataset compares to prior CEO dismissal research. The resulting data are available at (<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4543893>).

#### KEYWORDS

boards of directors, CEO dismissal, chief executive officers, equity analysts, open source database

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Understanding the causes and consequences of CEO succession has been a cornerstone of strategic leadership and governance research (for reviews, see Giambatista, Rowe, & Riaz, 2005; Kesner & Sebra, 1994). Within the broader CEO succession literature, scholars are often more directly concerned with involuntary turnover or dismissal (Berns & Klarner, 2017; Hilger, Man- kel, & Richter, 2013). Despite several important and influential studies of CEO dismissal, there remain significant challenges that limit scholars' ability to generate replicable findings and theory. We will highlight two challenges. First, unlike succession events broadly, dismissal is not easily observed, which makes gathering dismissal data more difficult. Indeed, identifying CEO dismissals is so difficult that scholars often measure or control for turnover, broadly, rather than coding for dismissal, even though dismissal is more aligned with their theory (e.g., Arthaud- Day, Certo, Dalton, & Dalton, 2006; Chen & Hambrick, 2012; Ndofor, Vanevenhoven, & Barker, 2013). Relying on coarse proxies raises questions about causal inference.

A second major issue is that, unlike most other variables related to CEOs and top executives, even when scholars attempt to directly measure dismissal, they are forced to hand collect archival accounts of the event and use their own judgment to categorize the departure as forced or ordinary succession. Although this classification has been somewhat standardized following the approach of Shen and Cannella (2002a), there has been no attempt to ensure that scholars are making these classifications correctly or that a given event is uniformly categorized across studies. In assessing dismissal, studies often rely on the authors' subjective assessments of contemporary press accounts of the turnover event (e.g., Jenter & Kanaan, 2015; Jenter & Lewellen, 2021; Schepker & Barker, 2018; Shen & Cannella, 2002a; Zhang, 2006). In some cases, expediency necessitates the application of coarse rubrics such as age or ongoing board membership as proxies for dismissal, which, as we will show, can lead to incorrect classification. In assessing three datasets from prior studies that coded for CEO dismissal, we found correlations of between 0.43 and 0.62, suggesting there is considerable disagreement. Importantly, small differences in the coding scheme used to determine dismissals could have unforeseen but substantial effects on analytical findings. For example, it could be that the existence or strength of the links between various indicators of performance and dismissal are dependent on the method used for coding dismissals. Because most studies collect these data independently and there has been no way to compare coding schemes, it is difficult, if not impossible to truly assess the extent of our knowledge and the replicability of core findings in the dismissal literature.

These challenges are the primary impetus for this project. Our goal is to develop a comprehensive, regularly updated, and freely available database of CEO departures that promotes openness and replicability for future research. To do so, we gathered turnover data on S&P 1500 firms from 2000 to 2018.<sup>1</sup> We undertook detailed coding on the causes for CEO departure, including specific detail regarding the reasons for voluntary and involuntary exits of the CEO. While our primary focus is on CEO dismissal, all succession events are captured and coded into one of eight categories representing several types of forced and ordinary turnover. In order to promote further openness of both our data and the coding of each event, we also provide narrative descriptions of each event as well as links to the specific sources we used to make our classifications. Notably, scholars could use these source materials in future research to reclassify the data based on their theoretical construct of interest or to improve or extend our coding scheme. Additionally, we obtained three additional CEO dismissal datasets that have been used previously in studies published in top management journals. After describing our database, we compare the extent to which these prior databases align with each other, and we then describe how our database both compares with and improves upon these prior datasets. We contribute to research on CEO succession by (a) providing open and available access to the full dataset for future scholars, (b) providing detailed information regarding the sources used to code each turnover, and (c) performing some preliminary analyses that demonstrate how differences in these databases may affect dismissal research.

## 2 | PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Before we describe our database in detail, we first provide an overview of prior research that has directly explored or accounted for CEO dismissal. In doing so, we note that Hilger et al. (2013) recently performed a more thorough review of this literature, providing an excellent summary of the antecedents and consequences of CEO and other top executive dismissal across multiple disciplines. Given this recent systematic review, we simply highlight major findings in this literature, but offer a more direct overview of prior methods used to assess CEO dismissal. We believe this brief review, summarized in Table 1, highlights the importance of our database.

Our brief review focuses on papers published in *Strategic Management Journal* and the *Academy of Management Journal* that directly considered CEO dismissal.<sup>2</sup> As shown in Table 1, of 85 empirical papers, we identified from these two journals that had to do with CEO succession, 27 (or about 32%) directly measured dismissal. Importantly, many of the other 58 papers considered CEO succession amidst situations that would implicitly be associated with dismissal (e.g., poor performance, financial misconduct, governance failures) (e.g., Arthaud-Day

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<sup>1</sup>Our database uses Execucomp database as the primary source of CEO turnover events. Execucomp lists companies from the S&P 1500 over time. It retains some firms as they are dropped from small-cap, mid-cap, and large-cap subindexes and adds firms when they are included in the indices. Consequently, our database includes observations for 2,243 firms from 2000 to 2018.

<sup>2</sup>We focus on studies published in SMJ and AMJ based on Hilger et al.'s (2013) finding that executive dismissal has been most studied in management journals, as well as our own finding that these two journals comprise the majority of studies of CEO succession, in general, as well as CEO dismissal, specifically. To identify relevant papers, we first searched Web of Science and EBSCO for all papers in these journals that mention the term "CEO" as well as any of the terms "succession," "dismissal," "departure," "turnover," "termination," or "fire"/"firing" in the title, abstract, or keywords. As we went through this initial set, we removed theory papers and reviews, as well as papers that did not directly have to do with CEO succession or dismissal.

**TABLE 1** Empirical studies on succession and dismissal in SMJ and AMJ (all time)

	SMJ		AMJ		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Succession studies	49		36		85	
Succession studies measuring dismissal	15	31	12	33	27	32
<i>Use of dismissal</i>						
Dismissal is DV	9	60	3	25	12	44
Dismissal is IV	1	7	4	33	5	19
Dismissal is both IV and DV	1	7	2	17	3	11
Dismissal is control	4	27	3	25	7	26
<i>Method for coding dismissal</i>						
Use SEC filings and/or media reports	14	93	10	83	24	89
Use positive indicators of dismissal	2	13	4	33	6	22
Use negative indicators as exclusion criteria	2	13	6	50	8	30
Use both positive and negative indicators of dismissal	11	73	4	33	15	56
Other sources	0	0	2	17	2	7

Abbreviations: AMJ, *Academy of Management Journal*; SMJ, *Strategic Management Journal*.

et al., 2006; Dalton & Kesner, 1985; Ndofor et al., 2013; Wiersema & Zhang, 2013) or dealt with succession outcomes where dismissal may have different implications than more general turnover (e.g., inside versus outside succession, postsuccession performance, postsuccession TMT composition) (e.g., Ballinger & Marcel, 2010; Boeker & Goodstein, 1993; Keck & Tushman, 1993; Keum, 2020; Miller, 1993; Osborn, Jauch, Martin, & Glueck, 1981). Thus, these numbers provide one indication of the potential value—in terms of the amount of research activity in this area—of our open access database for increasing the precision of future succession studies.

## 2.1 | Primary antecedents and consequences of CEO dismissal

Most of the studies we reviewed that directly measured CEO dismissal considered its antecedents—56%, including studies exclusively using it as a dependent variable as well as those including it as both an independent and dependent variable. Across these, the most studied antecedent is performance (Hilger et al., 2013). Scholars have examined various aspects of performance, including firm financial or market performance (e.g., Friedman & Singh, 1989; Wang, Zhao, & Chen, 2017; Wowak, Hambrick, & Henderson, 2011; Zhang, 2006) as well as external performance evaluations via analyst recommendations and the media (e.g., Bednar, 2012; Wiersema & Zhang, 2011). In general, these different aspects of performance tend to be negatively associated with CEO dismissal, although the precise effects vary to some extent across studies.<sup>3</sup> Additional research has shown that financial misconduct increases

<sup>3</sup>For example, whereas some studies find a strong negative relationship between financial performance (e.g., ROA, ROE) and CEO dismissal (e.g., Shen & Cannella, 2002a; Zhang, 2006), others do not find a meaningful effect for this measure of performance (e.g., Flickinger, Wrage, Tuschke, & Bresser, 2016; Zhang, 2008).

CEO dismissal (Park, Boeker, & Gomulya, 2020) and that different characteristics of the CEO (e.g., tenure, social status, firm-specific knowledge) (Flickinger et al., 2016; Shen & Cannella, 2002a; Wang et al., 2017) as well as board characteristics (e.g., outsider directors, board political ideology, CEO overpayment) (Park et al., 2020; Shen & Cannella, 2002a; Wowak et al., 2011) can also influence dismissal, or alter a CEO's likelihood of being dismissed for poor performance or misconduct.

A number of studies on CEO dismissal have also explored its consequences—30%, including studies exclusively using it as an independent variable as well as those including it as both an independent and dependent variable. In general, this work has focused on two broad consequences: external market reactions to the dismissal (Friedman & Singh, 1989; Gomulya & Mishina, 2017; Worrell, Davidson, & Glascock, 1993) and performance outcomes following the dismissal, generally attributed to the successor (Dwivedi, Joshi, & Misangyi, 2018; Gomez-Mejia, Nunez-Nickel, & Gutierrez, 2001; Shen & Cannella, 2002b). While dismissal tends to positively influence external reactions (i.e., given the expectation that it should enhance future outcomes), its effect on subsequent performance has been less consistent across studies (see Hilger et al., 2013). In short, both for the causes and consequences of dismissal, scholars have had some difficulty replicating one another's findings. To some extent, these difficulties may have to do with inconsistencies in how scholars have classified dismissals.

## 2.2 | Approaches to measuring CEO dismissal

For studies that directly examine CEO dismissal, there are two main ways that scholars code the event. The first is an algorithmic process of looking at turnover events and then coding as dismissal those events that occurred before a CEO reached age 65 and/or when the CEO did not retain a seat on the board (e.g., Graffin, Carpenter, & Boivie, 2011; Zhang & Rajagopalan, 2003, 2004). The second is a qualitative approach relying on authors' subjective assessments of concurrent firm disclosures (i.e., from SEC filings or press releases) or media accounts (i.e., news articles) of the turnover event to identify positive and/or negative evidence of CEO dismissal (e.g., Chung & Luo, 2013; Wiersema & Zhang, 2011; Zhang, 2006). For example, positive evidence would be news releases or company statements stating that the CEO was dismissed, forced out, resigned unexpectedly or immediately due to poor job performance or undisclosed personal reasons, or was reported as taking an early retirement amidst poor job performance. Positive evidence directly confirms that an exit was a dismissal. Conversely, negative evidence would imply that an exit was not a dismissal because evidence typical of a dismissal is missing. For example, forced departures typically see a CEO depart office immediately, an interim CEO appointed, and the departing CEO leaving the board. If these outcomes do not occur (e.g., the CEO remains with the firm or on the board for a period of time), then it is unlikely the transition was forced. Some additional indicators have also been used as exclusion criteria and reflect instances in which turnover was likely to be voluntary or caused by factors unrelated to dismissal. These include situations such as death or clear health issues, accepting an equivalent position at another firm, cases when the departing executive was acting as interim CEO, or when the event was related to a merger or acquisition.

Notably, these methods generally follow Shen and Cannella (2002a), who implemented a combination of both approaches to identify dismissals. In fact, of the studies reflected in Table 1, only two were conducted prior to 2002. One of these used a survey methodology to directly identify turnover events that were initiated by the board (Friedman & Singh, 1989) and

the other focused only on dismissals based on “clear-cut firing announcements in the financial press” (Worrell et al., 1993, p. 392). However, these approaches have some limitations, given the challenges associated with gaining access to boards for research purposes, as well as the fact that “many companies will indicate that a CEO departed voluntarily in order to maintain the CEO’s retirement and severance package, when in fact the departure was forced by the board” (Wiersema & Zhang, 2011, p. 1168). As a result, most subsequent studies used some variation on Shen and Cannella’s (2002a) approach, as a way to gauge broader sets of CEO dismissals.<sup>4</sup>

Still, as illustrated in Table 1, there has been variance in how scholars have applied these methods across studies. While many (i.e., about 56%) have used both positive and negative indicators of dismissal (e.g., Hubbard, Christensen, & Graffin, 2017; Park et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2017), some have exclusively focused on one or the other type of indicator (e.g., Dwivedi et al., 2018; Gomulya & Mishina, 2017; Worrell et al., 1993; Wowak et al., 2011; Zorn, DeGhetto, Ketchen, & Combs, 2020). Moreover, specific indicators vary between studies, at least in how they are described. For example, some studies mention excluding CEOs who were acting on an interim basis (e.g., Gomulya & Mishina, 2017; Hubbard et al., 2017; Zorn et al., 2020), while others do not. Similarly, some include cases where the CEO left for personal reasons (e.g., Zhang, 2006), while others make no mention of this indicator, instead using more stringent requirements to ensure that the resignation was forced by the board (e.g., Wiersema & Zhang, 2011; Worrell et al., 1993). Finally, about 11% of the studies we identified do not make use of company disclosures or press accounts of succession events, although doing so would provide more information from which to more accurately identify dismissals.

Discrepancies in how scholars have applied (or at least in how they describe) these methods have potentially limited the replicability of extant dismissal research. In addition, because coding specific events includes some subjectivity, and scholars have tended to code these independently, we have had no way to directly compare coding schemes across studies. This is particularly problematic because the vast majority (22 of the 27 studies we identified) have examined CEO dismissal in major, public U.S. companies, often during overlapping years. Thus, as we document below, it is clear that some of the same succession events have been coded differently across studies. Moving forward, our open-source database of CEO turnover and dismissals in S&P 1500 firms should help to resolve many of these issues and allow scholars to move towards a more complete and accurate understanding of CEO succession, generally, as well as the causes and consequences of CEO dismissal, specifically.

### 3 | CEO TURNOVER AND DISMISSAL DATASET

The original sample for our CEO succession coding effort began with a dataset maintained by one of the authors for his prior work related to CEO turnover (Hambrick & Quigley, 2014; Quigley & Graffin, 2017). These data, based on Execucomp, contained extensively updated information on the specific dates a CEO started and ended his or her tenure (a field that is frequently missing or inaccurate), resolved inconsistencies when Execucomp reports multiple CEOs (or no CEO at all) for a given period, and more precisely captured the tenure of interim or other short tenured CEOs that often serve less than a year. For example, some CEOs never appear in Execucomp. Others appear but are never coded as such (e.g., the “ceoann” variable

<sup>4</sup>One exception is Bednar (2012), who simply used the “resignation” variable in Execucomp as an indicator of CEO dismissal.

may never note their tenure). This dataset did not, however, include the reason for departure. From that dataset, we focused our efforts on succession events occurring between 2000 and 2018, which includes companies that are or have historically been part of the S&P 1500. For each of these CEO succession events, we collected news coverage and SEC filings from the web and university libraries to generate a complete picture of the turnover.

The initial collection of news coverage was done using an automated Google News search, which yielded 28,424 articles. After collecting articles, Amazon M-Turk workers then verified that each news article was relevant to the focal succession event and not some earlier event, such as when a CEO was hired, or a completely unrelated event. M-Turk workers were provided the URL to an article derived from the Google search, along with the CEO and company name related to a turnover event. They were then tasked with manually reviewing the articles to indicate whether each was related to a CEO turnover event. M-Turk workers did not evaluate the succession reasons. Their assessments provided the very basic starting point for coding departure events. In most instances, the effort was as simple as determining whether the article's title addressed a CEO's departure. From the initial pool of articles, 5,242 were identified as relevant to a CEO turnover event.

After verifying the relevance of collected articles, we began our coding effort. Given the wide array of coding schemes for CEO dismissal and exit (as shown in Table 1) and our focus on qualitatively coding CEO dismissal, we first needed a widely agreed-upon rubric for coding the reasons for CEO turnover. To create such a coding rubric, we solicited authors who had published a study that measured CEO turnover in a top-tier management journal over the last 5 years. We initially contacted the authors of 18 papers and asked them to comment on our coding scheme as well as provide their raw data for comparison purposes. From that request, we received responses from 13 authors. Of those, six responded with comments on the coding scheme and three provided novel datasets that were comparable enough to use for the purposes of this article.<sup>5</sup> We later used those three datasets to explore coding discrepancies to refine our own coding and to better understand idiosyncratic differences across samples. The end result, after feedback and revision, is shown in Table 2. Our coding scheme provides detailed categorization of dismissals, as well as voluntary turnover and forms of involuntary turnover not reflecting dismissal (i.e., death and health reasons).

Once we had finalized our coding scheme, it was translated into detailed instructions which are available as an online Appendix to this manuscript. Using this document as their guide, we had independent raters read through the news coverage and SEC filings we previously collected and categorize each CEO departure into one of the eight categories in Table 2. Raters also added further web sources as necessary to make a determination. The coding was done primarily by paid undergraduate students in a computer lab under the direct supervision of two strategy PhD students at a major university in the southeastern United States. The doctoral students were present to answer questions and monitored students' work in real time using Google Docs. If a student was miscoding events or not coding with enough detail, the doctoral students coached the student how to improve. The data coders generally averaged 8 hr a week across two weekly data coding sessions. In total, 23 coders were employed over two semesters, and all

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<sup>5</sup>Of the others who responded, seven authors measured turnover broadly, and did not actually code CEO dismissal. Also, two had data on firms outside of the U.S. context, which we could not compare to our sample. Two other authors said that their data came from a database maintained by an author in a field outside of management, whom we subsequently contacted. Thus, the three comparable datasets we evaluated include the database from the author outside of management and two usable sets provided directly by the management scholars we contacted.

TABLE 2 CEO departure reasons and definitions

Code	Title	Brief description
1	Involuntary—CEO death	The CEO died while in office and did not have an opportunity to resign before health failed
2	Involuntary—CEO illness	Required announcement that the CEO was leaving for health concerns rather than removed during a health crisis
3	Involuntary—CEO dismissed for job performance	The CEO stepped down for reasons related to job performance. This included situations where the CEO was immediately terminated as well as when the CEO was given some transition period, but the media coverage was negative. Often the media cited financial performance or some other failing of CEO job performance (e.g., leadership deficiencies, innovation weaknesses, etc.)
4	Involuntary—CEO dismissed for personal issues	The CEO was terminated for behavioral or policy-related problems. The CEO's departure was almost always immediate, and the announcement cited an instance where the CEO violated company HR policy, expense account cheating, and so forth
5	Voluntary—CEO retired	Voluntary retirement based on how the turnover was reported in the media. Here, the departure did not sound forced, and the CEO often had a voice or comment in the succession announcement. Media coverage of voluntary turnover was more valedictory than critical. Firms use different mandatory retirement ages, so we could not use 65 or older and facing mandatory retirement as a cut off. We examined coverage around the event and subsequent coverage of the CEO's career when it sounded unclear
6	Voluntary—New opportunity	The CEO left to pursue a new venture or to work at another company. This frequently occurred in startup firms and for founders
7	Other	Interim CEOs, CEO departure following a merger or acquisition, company ceased to exist, company changed key identifiers so it is not an actual turnover, and CEO may or may not have taken over the new company
8	Missing	Despite attempts to collect information, there was not sufficient data to assign a code to the turnover event. These will remain the subject of further investigation and expansion

entries were double-checked by the doctoral students for clarity and citation accuracy as they were entered. If a departure event was not clear or there was disagreement, the undergraduate student and the doctoral students conferred and came to a decision as a group. If an incident was particularly unclear, then the doctoral students would consult one of the study's authors to discuss the event and make a resolution on the final coding. For clarity, and to assist future research in recoding or expanding on our data, every departure event in the database lists web references that were used to make the coding determination.

The COVID-19 pandemic stopped the in-person coding effort. At that point, undergraduate raters had coded 2,848 turnover events. The final 1,287 events were coded by a data collection company outside of the United States. The coding from the outsourcing firm was then remotely double-checked by two of the doctoral students involved in the original coding effort using the same processes. As an additional check on potentially challenging cases, the authors of this article reviewed all cases where there was disagreement between our dataset and any of the other



three datasets that we obtained to ensure accuracy. Finally, to ensure coding reliability across raters, an independent coder (a fulltime MBA student) reexamined 100 observations that were coded by the undergraduate students and an additional 100 observations that were coded by the outsourcing firm. Across the 200 observations, the independent coder's results matched those of both the undergraduate coders and the outsourcing firm 87% of the time. This is a substantial level of agreement and indicates that our coding procedure produced reliable results.

We identified 6,575 events that could be a CEO succession in Execucomp between 2000 and 2018. Of those, the previously published dataset and our own efforts allowed us to identify 2,434 potential departures in Execucomp as nonevents (i.e., the CEO was still in office, the company name changed, the CEO was part of a co-CEO arrangement or was an interim, the company ceased to exist, the executive was CEO of a division but not the entire firm, or we could not find that the CEO appeared in media articles or SEC filings as the company's CEO). Where the coverage and rationale for the turnover appeared to change over time, we used the most recent information as the basis for our determination. Our general coding approach was to be conservative when coding turnover by assuming an event was voluntary and only coding it as involuntary if we found sufficient evidence. However, in some cases, we could not find any documentation discussing the CEO or his/her performance, departure, or description of the CEO's tenure. In these cases, we coded the turnover as "missing" (code 8). Our final coding includes 42 events where we were unable to find any relevant documentation.

The final database has turnover information on 4,141 CEO departures over the 19-year period from 2000 through 2018. A breakdown of these events by departure code and year is provided in Table 3. In our analyses, we further exclude events coded as "Other" from our analysis. The full database is available to download at (<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4543893>).

## 4 | QUALITATIVE COMPARISON OF DATASETS

As mentioned above, part of our data coding effort included a comparison of our own coding against those of three previously published papers in top management journals. While obtaining these datasets, we guaranteed the authors anonymity, so we have redacted their names in the analysis and discussion below. We refer to their datasets below as Samples 1, 2, and 3.

Primarily, we were interested in whether the use of various datasets with idiosyncratic coding of CEO dismissal could alter the results of published research in this area. We first examined the correlations between dismissals in our dataset (departure Codes 3 and 4 from Table 2) and the coded dismissals in the other sets. Summary statistics and pairwise correlations for each measure of dismissal are shown in Table 4. Correlations between the four dismissal datasets range from 0.43 (between Samples 1 and 2) to 0.62 (between Samples 2 and 3). While the measures offer general agreement, there was disagreement on coding for dismissal between 10 and 25% of the time.

To better understand the inconsistencies across samples, we investigated each instance of disagreement. We found four basic reasons for disagreement between samples: (a) problems with using the board membership criterion to classify dismissals, (b) dismissals for nonperformance related reasons, (c) age thresholds that were used and allowed some cases to escape scrutiny, and (d) simple coding errors.

TABLE 3 Coded events by departure code and year

Code	Departures by year																			
	Full sample	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
1	48	6	4	3	3	0	3	2	3	1	2	4	2	3	2	2	3	3	2	0
2	69	3	1	1	5	2	3	4	3	1	2	6	6	8	3	1	3	6	8	3
3	870	50	37	51	29	41	41	39	62	62	37	41	47	49	41	59	50	54	40	40
4	153	7	8	13	5	9	12	15	6	11	9	6	7	2	5	5	7	9	9	8
5	2,193	149	105	112	111	139	108	125	141	118	89	116	124	109	120	120	131	106	94	76
6	117	6	2	4	5	9	5	4	9	6	10	7	13	8	5	6	3	5	6	4
7	649	39	10	17	21	28	20	26	42	29	24	45	53	40	38	56	57	51	42	11
8	42	9	2	0	1	1	2	0	7	1	1	4	1	1	3	2	2	4	1	0
Total	4,141	269	169	201	180	229	194	215	273	229	174	229	253	220	217	251	256	238	202	142

**TABLE 4** Pairwise correlation of CEO dismissal in prior published research<sup>a</sup>

	Sample	N	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1	Sample 1 dismissal	1,036	0.23	0.42		367	730	943
2	Sample 2 dismissal	499	0.28	0.45	0.43		232	458
3	Sample 3 dismissal	1,812	0.30	0.46	0.53	0.62		1,635
4	Our dismissal	3,450	0.25	0.43	0.47	0.60	0.54	

<sup>a</sup>N represents the size of each sample (ours and those received from other authors). The values in the upper-right of the matrix capture the number of overlap succession events for each pair of samples. In the lower-left portion of the matrix provides the pairwise correlations for CE dismissal of the samples. These are the raw data as sent to us before integrating with board, analyst and Compustat information. Our sample excludes departures coded 7 (other) and 8 (missing).

#### 4.1 | Shortcomings of the board membership criterion

Shen and Cannella (2002a, 2002b) used a straightforward rubric to differentiate dismissals from ordinary retirements. Specifically, they noted, “Given that firms are unlikely to keep dismissed CEOs on their boards, [they] used both CEO age and continued board membership to separate [ordinary from forced departures]” (Shen & Cannella, 2002b, p. 724). This rubric, however, does not consider three interrelated realities: First, departing CEOs may have power to affect their own departure in the form of large shareholdings, long tenure, and support from some (but not all) important constituencies (Finkelstein, 1992; Westphal & Zajac, 1995). Second, firms likely have a strong desire for an amicable transition of control from one CEO to another and this would likely include the desire that the CEO abide by relevant noncompete clauses that might be invalidated by a forced departure. Third, even when a CEO is forced out, there are likely loose ends to be tied up, outward appearances to be maintained, and even the ability for a departing CEO to “save face” by having some say in how the transition plays out. For all these reasons, simply asserting that a CEO who stays on the board, even for a few days or weeks, cannot have been subject to a forced departure is potentially faulty.

For example, Sample 3 coded the departure of Donald K. Peterson from Avaya as voluntary. Peterson was 57 years old, stepped down as CEO in late July of 2006, but remained chairman of the board through the end of September, or more than 2 months. However, news coverage of his departure also noted the firm's poor performance saying, “The shakeup came as Avaya reported third-quarter profit far below its results from a year earlier...it reported net income of US\$44 million... compared with \$194 million... a year earlier” (Lawson, 2006). The company also underwent significant restructuring in early 2007 as a result of poor performance (Avaya, 2006a), further suggesting this was a performance-related forced departure, even though Peterson was allowed to remain on the board for a short time. Also of note is the fact that, shortly after Peterson's departure, Avaya modified its “Involuntary separation plan” with top executives, perhaps as a means to ensure the ability to more quickly force out leaders in the future if needed (Avaya, 2006b).

Similarly, Sample 1 coded the departure of Ray Irani from Occidental Petroleum as voluntary, yet there is strong evidence this was a negotiated, but still forced, departure. Irani was 75 years old and remained chair of the board for several years, which clearly matches the ordinary or unforced succession criteria outlined by Shen and Cannella (2002a, 2002b). However, it is well documented that large institutional investors were calling for change in 2010 (see Occidental, 2014). Bowing to that pressure, in October 2010:

“the Company began a progression of senior management, corporate governance and compensation program changes. First, the Board announced in October 2010 that Dr. Ray Irani, who had been Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Occidental for 20 years, would step down as Chief Executive Officer, and that Stephen Chazen, the President and Chief Operating Officer, would become Chief Executive Officer. These changes were effected at the May 2011 Annual Meeting. Dr. Irani remained on the Board and became Executive Chairman” (Occidental, 2014).

A year later, Irani failed to receive the needed votes to remain a director and immediately resigned his position. Despite this, as late as 2015, Fortune reported that Irani was “the oil giant’s largest single shareholder” (#1741 Ray Irani, 2015). Thus, it appears Irani’s departure as CEO was a negotiated ouster made possible by extensive shareholdings and more than 20 years as CEO of the firm.

## 4.2 | Dismissals for nonperformance reasons

While some authors coded as a dismissal any departure related to “policy disagreements,” only Sample 2 explicitly recognized as dismissals the departure of a CEO for other violations like SEC investigations and criminal conduct outside of work. For example, Sample 1 coded Gary Butler’s departure from Automatic Data Processing as routine succession while Sample 2 coded it as a dismissal. Just days before Butler’s departure, he was arrested and charged with domestic violence stemming from an event that occurred a few weeks earlier (Linebaugh, 2013). In other examples, Daniel Mudd departed Fannie Mae after charges were filed for SEC violations (Sample 1 coded this as a regular succession event), Jeffrey Rich left Affiliated Computer Services after being accused of backdating options (Sample 2 coded this as a regular succession), and Phaneesh Murthy of iGate Corp. was terminated as a result of sexual harassment charges (Sample 2 coded this as a regular succession). In our dataset, we capture these as forced departures, but in a category that makes clear, it was for reasons other than job performance.

## 4.3 | Issues with an age threshold

In some cases, authors have assumed departures of CEOs over the age of 64 are voluntary, meaning these cases might avoid scrutiny that could uncover reasons for dismissal. This may be another reason that Sample 1 coded the previously cited example of Ray Irani’s departure as CEO of Occidental Petroleum (at the age of 75), as a voluntary turnover, though there is reason to consider this event a negotiated dismissal. As another example, Sample 1 also coded as voluntary the 2008 departure of Raymond Mason from Legg Mason. Given his extensive career and being one of the firm’s founders, the news around his departure was generally positive (e.g., Brewster & Freeland, 2008). However, at 71 years of age, his departure was announced on January 29, 2008 with immediate effect (Brewster, 2008). Additionally, while he was listed as the board’s nonexecutive chairman on the 2008 proxy statement, he was no longer chairman on the 2009 statement. Despite the laudatory press coverage at the conclusion of his tenure, his departure was sudden, he left the board very quickly, and just weeks later the *Finance Times* referred to the company as “troubled,” subsequent *Wall Street Journal* coverage referred to the company’s investments as troubled (Gullapalli, 2008), and various outlets questioned recent acquisitions (Newmark, 2008; Whitehouse, 2008).

## 4.4 | Coding errors

Finally, some of the differences occurring in the various datasets are simple coding errors. For example, Sample 2 coded the departure of Thomas Seifert from Advanced Micro Devices as a dismissal while Sample 1 did not. Seifert was an interim CEO who returned to his prior position for several months and then resigned from the firm. Thus, his ultimate resignation came as CFO, not as interim CEO. Moreover, even at the time of his departure, it was viewed as a loss for the firm. Barron's, for example, reported that the departure was "the latest in a string of high-profile losses for the long-beleaguered company" (Rivas, 2012) and a Reuters headline noted "AMD loses respected CFO, shares plunge" while reporting that "Seifert now wants to find a permanent CEO position" (Randewich, 2012). In another case, Sample 3 coded Julian Day's departure from Sears as a dismissal, while others called it a voluntary departure. By all accounts, his departure as CEO in October 2002, at the age of 52, was voluntary. Financial performance at the time was strong (ROA of 13%) and he remained on the board for another 17 months, at which time it was announced that he would not "stand for re-election to the board of directors [in order to] devote more time to various other business interests" (Sears, 2006).

## 5 | QUANTITATIVE COMPARISON OF DATASETS

Given the variations in the coding schemes between datasets, we last sought to understand whether these differences might affect research outcomes. Rather than doing a replication of prior work, we instead focused on one of the more fundamental relationships in governance research—namely, the link between financial performance and CEO dismissal. By comparing results for the four datasets (ours and the three we obtained from other scholars) using the same empirical model, we were able to identify and discuss any differences in the patterns of relationships observed for each dataset. We considered three measures of performance: (a) analyst downgrades, (b) stock performance, and (c) accounting performance.

### 5.1 | Dependent variables

The dependent variables for our analysis include our own coding of CEO dismissal as well as dismissals coded in the three other datasets. As previously described, we coded CEO dismissal by looking at media coverage and SEC filings both surrounding a CEO's departure and after the departure to determine whether the CEO was fired for reasons identified in our coding system. For our data, we classified as dismissals those with departure codes of 3 or 4 from Table 2. For the other three datasets, we used the data as it was provided.

### 5.2 | Independent variables

We coded *analyst downgrades* as the number of downgrades issued by equity analysts covering the stock in the 180 days prior to the close of the last fiscal year the CEO was listed as the firm's leader. *Average analyst recommendation*, has a long history in CEO dismissal work (Puffer & Weintrop, 1991; Wiersema & Zhang, 2011). Because the tendency to dismiss the CEO is likely

endogenous with firm performance and analyst recommendations (i.e., these variables will all move in unison with an unobserved performance shock), Wiersema and Zhang (2011) used the residual from a regression using the log of firm sales, the industry-adjusted stock market return, industry-adjusted accounting performance and a set of year dummy variables to predict the average analyst score. Essentially, their measure is the movement in analyst recommendations unexplained by financial performance. Our measure of analyst recommendations is the same, and as with their measure, ours is reverse coded from the data presented in I/B/E/S so that a higher score indicates more favorable coverage.

In addition to analyst ratings, we assessed firm stock performance using *industry-adjusted market return*, using Compustat's Total Market Return variable less the industry's mean return (Wiersema & Zhang, 2011). We used the 4-digit Global Industry Classification (GIC) classifications to group firms into industries (Wowak, Mannor, & Wowak, 2015). Accounting performance was assessed using *industry-adjusted return on assets* (ROA), calculated by subtracting the sized-adjusted industry mean ROA (4-digit GICS) from the focal firm ROA (Hambrick & Quigley, 2014).

### 5.3 | Control variables

We selected control variables that might impact dismissal beyond simple firm performance. The first, *firm size* was measured using the natural log of sales to adjust for skewness (Boivie, Graffin, & Gentry, 2016). Prior work has found evidence that firms with complex strategies are harder for analysts and for the stock markets to understand (Gu & Wang, 2005; Litov, Moreton, & Zenger, 2012). To capture this, we control for the firm's *strategic nonconformity* (higher is more unorthodox) using the Geletkanycz and Hambrick (1997) measure, again using 4-digit GIC industry codes. We control for *board size* because larger boards might have different approaches to monitoring and more resources to support the firm. This might change the relationship between poor performance and CEO dismissal (Hillman, Withers, & Collins, 2009). We also control for *CEO duality* because if the CEO is also the chairman, he or she might have influence over the termination process and the ability to control information flow to the board, lowering the board's monitoring effectiveness and the relationship between turnover and performance (Krause, Semadeni, & Cannella, 2014). All models also included year fixed effects, and all variables are measured in the CEO's last reported fiscal year before departure.

### 5.4 | Model

We modeled CEO turnover using random-effect logistic regression models. A random-effect model relaxes the restriction that each panel must have an observed dismissal over the sample period, while accounting for some within-firm variance. Panel logit or probit regressions have been used in other turnover studies incorporating analyst recommendations and other performance outcomes (Fisman, Khurana, Rhodes-Kropf, & Yim, 2014; Hubbard et al., 2017; Wiersema & Zhang, 2011). Our models follow in this tradition and employ robust standard errors clustered on company identifiers. Models were estimated using Stata 15.1.

## 5.5 | Results

We present the summary statistics and correlations for all variables included in our analysis in Table 5. Correlations between analyst downgrades and the dismissal variables are consistently positive and also similar in magnitude for three of the samples ( $r = .08$ – $.09$ ), but not for Sample 2. Correlations between market performance and the dismissal variables are each negative but vary in magnitude between the samples ( $r = -.07$  to  $-.13$ ). These relationships demonstrate some initial evidence of consistency with the theorized relationships between analysts' downgrades and market performance with CEO dismissal, but also important differences in terms of the strength of those relationships. Similar patterns are shown for the correlations between dismissal and some control variables, including the negative correlations with average analyst recommendations ( $r = -.03$  to  $-.10$ ) and CEO duality ( $r = -.07$  to  $-.13$ ). In contrast, and mirroring some of the inconsistencies reported by Hilger et al. (2013), correlations between dismissal and financial performance, as well as some of the other controls (e.g., firm size, board size), are less consistent with theory and/or across samples. Overall, the correlations indicate some consistency across samples, but also demonstrate that idiosyncrasies in coding CEO dismissal (either by choice or error) can have a meaningful impact on observed relationships.

Results of our random effect logistic regression models in Table 6 show similar patterns. The coefficients for analyst downgrades and market performance are in the expected direction for each sample (i.e., downgrades are positively related to dismissal; performance is negatively related to dismissal), but with some discrepancies in terms of magnitude. In Sample 2 (Model 2), analyst downgrades do not appear to have a meaningful impact on dismissal ( $\beta = -.01$ ,  $p = .83$ ), while the other samples support the importance of analyst downgrades for dismissal ( $\beta = .07$ – $.11$ ,  $p = .00$ ). In terms of effect sizes, models using our data and data from Sample 1 suggest that a single downgrade increases the likelihood of dismissal by 10–11%, while Sample 3's results are three quarters that (7%). There are also some differences across samples in terms of the importance of stock market returns. While the coefficients and p-values are comparable ( $\beta = -.01$  to  $-.02$ ,  $p = .00$ – $.05$ ), effect sizes differ somewhat. Moving from the 75th percentile of stock performance to the 25th percentile, relative to the industry mean, is associated with between a 52% increase in dismissal probability in our data and a 68% increase in Sample 2.

Related to our controls, the average level of analyst recommendations appears to be strongly negatively related to CEO dismissal ( $\beta = -.65$  to  $-.98$ ,  $p = .00$ ). Again, though, effect sizes vary between samples. Moving from the 75th percentile to the 25th percentile relative to the mean level of analyst recommendations is associated with between a 50% increase in the probability of dismissal in Sample 1, and a 65% increase in Sample 3. We find similar patterns for CEO duality. Coefficients are quite large in magnitude across samples ( $\beta = -.48$  to  $-.95$ ,  $p = .00$ ), but the effect sizes show meaningful differences. The implied reduction in the likelihood of dismissal for CEOs who are also chairman ranged from 35% in our data to 57% in Sample 3.

There were some instances where models showed more inconsistent results between samples. The low  $p$ -value for the board size result in Model 2 ( $p = .07$ ) might suggest that the coefficient is different from zero in Sample 2, but the corresponding values are closer to zero for the other samples. In addition, Samples 1, 3, and our sample seem to support a nonzero effect for strategic nonconformity ( $p = .01$ – $.07$ ), suggesting that nonconformity is positively related to dismissal in these samples; however, we do not find evidence of a meaningful relationship in Sample 2.

Overall, in addition to the time and effort required to compile the various datasets, they provided an array of meaningfully different estimates which, in turn, affect the practical significance and policy conclusions one might draw from the underlying research they represent. Certainly,

TABLE 5 Descriptive statistics and pairwise correlations for comparison analysis<sup>a</sup>

Variable	N	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1 Sample 1 dismissal	4,848	0.05	0.22											
2 Sample 2 dismissal	4,583	0.04	0.20	0.47										
3 Sample 3 dismissal	6,838	0.08	0.27	0.62	0.63									
4 Our dismissal	17,701	0.06	0.23	0.58	0.45	0.65								
5 Analyst downgrades	15,515	1.80	2.10	0.09	0.00	0.09	0.08							
6 Average analyst recommendation	15,779	0.01	0.88	-0.10	-0.07	-0.05	-0.03	-0.22						
7 Industry-adjusted market return	20,164	-1.85	45.70	-0.08	-0.07	-0.13	-0.10	-0.14	0.01					
8 Industry-adjusted ROA	19,866	1.37	5.86	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.04				
9 Firm size	20,189	7.36	1.57	0.04	-0.07	-0.03	-0.01	0.21	0.02	-0.02	-0.05			
10 Strategic nonconformity	20,476	2.19	1.27	0.01	0.03	0.05	0.05	0.02	-0.02	0.00	0.03	0.00		
11 Board size	16,805	9.35	2.36	0.00	-0.07	-0.03	-0.01	0.11	-0.02	-0.03	-0.03	0.57	-0.06	
12 CEO duality	20,477	0.49	0.50	-0.08	-0.11	-0.13	-0.07	0.06	0.00	-0.01	-0.01	0.20	-0.06	0.16

Abbreviation: ROA, return on assets.

<sup>a</sup>Confidence intervals for pairwise correlations are available from the authors by request.



TABLE 6 Comparison of random effect logistic regression models predicting dismissal

Variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6	
	$\beta$	<i>p</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>
Analyst downgrades	.10 (.02)	.00	-.01 (.05)	.83	.07 (.02)	.00	.11 (.03)	.00	.02 (.06)	.75	.02 (.03)	.47
Average analyst recommendation	-.65 (.11)	.00	-.94 (.21)	.00	-.65 (.11)	.00	-.98 (.10)	.00	-.04 (.39)	.95	-.28 (.16)	.07
Industry-adjusted market return	-.01 (.00)	.00	-.01 (.00)	.05	-.01 (.00)	.00	-.02 (.00)	.00	.00 (.00)	.72	-.30 (.10)	.00
Industry-adjusted ROA	-.03 (.02)	.20	.00 (.01)	.73	-.03 (.02)	.20	.00 (.01)	.92	-.02 (.02)	.44	-.01 (.01)	.24
Firm size	-.04 (.05)	.35	-.26 (.11)	.02	-.04 (.05)	.35	-.07 (.04)	.09	.04 (1.43)	.98	.33 (.13)	.01
Strategic nonconformity	.08 (.04)	.07	.03 (.09)	.77	.08 (.04)	.07	.08 (.03)	.01	-.10 (.24)	.69	-.08 (.01)	.45
Board size	-.04 (.02)	.10	-.11 (.06)	.07	-.04 (.02)	.10	-.02 (.02)	.40	-.05 (.17)	.79	.07 (.06)	.26
CEO duality	-.95 (.12)	.00	-.76 (.21)	.00	-.95 (.12)	.00	-.48 (.09)	.00	-.11 (.57)	.85	-.90 (.23)	.00
Constant	-5.08 (.90)	.00	-1.14 (1.04)	.27	-3.41 (.55)	.00	-2.66 (.30)	.00	-9.68 (8.54)	.26	-9.80 (.88)	.00
Year dummies	(Included)		(Included)		(Included)		(Included)		(Included)		(Included)	
Log likelihood	-678.30		-418.10		-1,305.70		-2,048.13		-897.68		-3,060.01	
$\chi^2$	166.39	0.00	73.51	0.00	302.94	0.00	360.01	0.00	33.10	0.13	73.67	0.00
<i>N</i>	4,551		2,360		6,612		12,074		12,074		12,074	
Number of firms	547		504		1,136		1,584		1,584		1,584	

Note: Robust SEs in parentheses; *p* values in column immediately to the right of the regression coefficient. Abbreviation: ROA, return on assets.

none of the differences we find rise to the level of threatening the integrity of the research in the published papers using the datasets that the authors shared with us, but an open-source database that is free, well documented, transparent, and available will allow for more consistency across projects and the potential to harmonize policy and theory implications across studies.

One specific example of this is our separation of dismissals for poor performance and cases caused by personal behavior or misconduct. Models 5 and 6 demonstrate that separating dismissals into these categories yields different empirical results. Behavior-related dismissals are not meaningfully related to other predictor variables from Table 6 (Model 5). Since these events should be less directly related to corporate performance, this outcome is not surprising. However, interestingly, we find that the coefficients of the predictor variables in Model 6 become slightly weaker when we remove behavior-related dismissals. Our initial assumption was that removing these dismissals would remove noise from the performance-related dismissals and that the models would document a stronger relationship, but that was not the case. This initial evidence suggests that findings related to CEO departure might differ if the two types of dismissals are considered jointly versus separately. It also appears that combining these two categories of dismissal introduces some noise into related analyses but in ways that are counter to our initial expectations. However, our initial analyses suggest that the way this noise manifests may be unclear, indicating a possible opportunity for new theorizing and future study.

Consider a situation where a CEO is fired immediately and without explanation. This firing might actually be a behavior-related departure that looks initially like a performance-related event. Consequently, if this departure event is coded as performance-related it might end up contributing to spurious or weakened effects. This is why having an open-source dataset where changes can be made and seen publicly is important, because later information may arise that allows the dismissal to be coded correctly. Many of our behavior-related dismissals were only able to be correctly classified once additional information became public, sometimes after considerable time had passed since the event.

In contrast, consider Brian Dunn's 2012 departure from Best Buy. It was immediate and was accompanied by clear statements from the firm about the reasons for his termination (that he violated company policies on personal conduct and that there were no issues related to the company's operations). As such, this was easy to classify as a behavior-related dismissal. However, this event also followed months of declining sales and other firm-performance related issues. It is possible that the motivation for the firm to more explicitly disclose these behavior problems may have also been connected to the firm's troubling performance and exit from China. That is, while it is clear Dunn was fired for personal misconduct, absent the poor performance, he might have been given some latitude. This may suggest that personal misconduct is more likely to lead to termination when it is accompanied by poor performance. While all of this highlights the importance of understanding the different types of dismissal, this logic might explain the slightly weakening relationships in Model 6.<sup>6</sup>

## 6 | FUTURE RESEARCH

Our open-source database of CEO dismissals could be applied in several ways to advance future succession research. We anticipate many scholars will wish to use our data to further explore the antecedents and consequences of dismissal. While the general relationship between firm

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<sup>6</sup>We would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this further analysis.

performance and dismissal is well-established, we currently know less about the boundary conditions surrounding this relationship. In part, our lack of knowledge in this area stems from inconclusive findings related to the effects of some situational factors, for example, ownership structure and firm size (see Hilger et al., 2013). Given that discrepancies in coding dismissal can contribute to inconsistent findings, utilizing our detailed database of CEO turnover and dismissal may help to clarify some of these effects.

Scholars may also use our dataset to expand on the basic analyses presented in our paper, perhaps by exploring the differences between performance indicators as predictors of CEO dismissal. Our analyses are consistent with prior work that has found that analyst recommendations and market performance each predict CEO dismissal (Flickinger et al., 2016; Hubbard et al., 2017; Wiersema & Zhang, 2011; Wowak et al., 2011), but we do not find an effect for firm financial performance. These findings support the notion that boards may primarily use dismissal as a symbolic action when external evaluations of the firm are more negative but may be less likely to dismiss a CEO solely on the basis of (internal) financial performance. One can imagine a number of important moderators and boundary conditions for this relationship that future research could more fully explore. For example, what alternative methods do firms or boards use to course-correct when financial performance declines, and what situational factors influence the likelihood of using those methods versus dismissing the CEO? Or, integrating a temporal perspective, how long does a firm have to be underperforming, in terms of accounting measures, before the board decides to dismiss the CEO? Furthermore, future research could explore how factors might differentially explain departures for behavior versus departures for performance.

The wide availability of our database will also facilitate research on previously un-explored or under-explored antecedents to dismissal. For example, recent strategic leadership research has highlighted the importance of socio-cognitive factors for firm-level processes and outcomes, including CEOs' personality traits (Benischke, Martin, & Glaser, 2019; Harrison, Thurgood, Boivie, & Pfarrer, 2020; Peterson, Smith, Martorana, & Owens, 2003) as well as professional and social ties between the CEO and other executives (Wiersema, Nishimura, & Suzuki, 2018). While some of these have been linked to more general executive turnover (e.g., Resick, Weingarden, Whitman, & Hiller, 2009), it would be interesting to explore how socio-cognitive factors differentially affect dismissal, specifically. For example, are more extraverted or charismatic CEOs more likely to engage in behaviors (e.g., impressions management, power plays, etc.) that reduce their likelihood of being dismissed when problems arise? Are CEOs less likely to be dismissed when they have stronger ties to other executives or the board? Or, given the often-symbolic nature of dismissal, might such ties increase the likelihood of dismissal, so that the board can avoid the appearance of nepotism?

Future work using our database could also expand our understanding of the consequences of dismissal, which have historically received much less attention than its antecedents (see Hilger et al., 2013, p. 20). Here, again, scholars have found consistent evidence that market reactions to CEO dismissal tend to be positive (e.g., Friedman & Singh, 1989; Gomulya & Mishina, 2017; Worrell et al., 1993), but the long-term financial implications of dismissal are less clear. Dismissals are expensive (Yermack, 2006) and cause a great deal of internal disruption for firms (Wiersema, 2002). To some extent, this disruption is intentional (i.e., dismissal as a turnaround strategy); however, they may also have negative residual consequences for firm processes or internal TMT dynamics, which future work may wish to explore. For instance, how does dismissing the CEO (relative to other remedial actions) influence subsequent, voluntary executive turnover? Moreover, the process surrounding dismissal can vary, and this

variance may have different implications for longer-term outcomes. So, for example, what are the performance implications of appointing an interim CEO after dismissing the incumbent, versus more quickly identifying a permanent successor? Our open database may facilitate future research seeking to better understand some of these more intermediate processes and longer-term outcomes of CEO dismissal.

Future research will also benefit from the opportunity to recode, reclassify, or expand our coding scheme. CEO dismissal researchers who want to investigate the reasons or causes for dismissal currently need to undertake an exhaustive and costly data collection effort that, as we have shown, can lead to some idiosyncratic differences between datasets and results. An open-source dataset with clear citations and coding can lay the foundation for future researchers who want to change the coding scheme, for example, looking at dismissed CEOs who left office immediately as opposed to those who had a succession period or a transition consulting contract. We hope that our dataset can help advance these questions, many of which are largely unstudied. We also plan to follow best practices for version control so any changes to the dataset or coding that occurs in the future will be noted and freely available to scholars, thus improving the replicability and comparability of research efforts.

Finally, scholars can apply our database to improve the accuracy of succession research dealing with departures other than dismissal. As described earlier in the paper, difficulties coding dismissal have historically led many scholars studying succession to measure turnover, generally, even when accounting for dismissal would be theoretically or empirically relevant. We expect future research examining more general succession outcomes to use our database to control for the reason for the CEO departure. The large size of our sample should facilitate this by allowing scholars to apply it to different subsets of succession events. Moreover, because we coded reasons for the CEO departure other than dismissal, scholars can apply our database to better understand other unique types of turnover. For instance, some work has explored the consequences of sudden CEO death (Combs & Skill, 2003) and appointment of an interim CEO during a succession (Ballinger & Marcel, 2010; Chen, Luo, Tang, & Tong, 2015), but these forms of turnover are terribly underrepresented in the succession literature. Moving forward, scholars may draw on our large, open-source database to explore a myriad of succession-related questions.

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## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

This article has earned an Open Data badge for making publicly available the digitally shareable data necessary to reproduce results and extend future work. These data and future revisions are available at <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4543893>. Learn more about the Open Practices badges from the Center for Open Science: <https://osf.io/tvyxz/wiki>.

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## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

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